

Minnesota Transportation Museum

# MINNEGAZETTE

Fall 1995







Official Publication of the

# MINNESOTA TRANSPORTATION MUSEUM, INC.

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## CIRCULATION

The MinneGazette is published quarterly by the Minnesota Transportation Museum, Inc., and is mailed to members in good standing without charge under Third Class postal permit. Members may request First Class Mailing for an additional \$5 per year charge.

## SUBMISSIONS

The MinneGazette welcomes submissions for publication of articles, photos and other illustrative materials of historical interest relating to transportation in the Upper Midwest. No payment is made, and publication is at the editor's discretion.

## MUSEUM PURPOSE

The Museum is a non-profit educational corporation organized in Minnesota in 1962 to preserve and communicate to the public the experience of Minnesota's surface public transportation history. It operates the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line and the Minnehaha Depot in Minneapolis, the Jackson Street Roundhouse in St. Paul, the Osceola & St. Croix Valley Ry. in Osceola and the Steamboat Minnehaha restoration in Excelsior.

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## THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY

-To Northern States Powers Co. and Robert Schulte for donating a used 3/4 ton service truck to the Railroad Division.

-To Paul Webster and Webster Lumber for donating replacement ties for the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line and the Excelsior Trolley.

-To the Railway Mail Service Gun Club and Steam Operations Corporation for their donations to the Railroad Fund

-To Dick and Carol Fish, Ruth Benson, Dewey and Marietta Hassig, Debra Wood, Loren Martin, Louis Hoffman, Keith Lindberg, Bill Herzog, Ray and Ruth Hopper, Doug Hultgren, Stuart Powers, William J. Olsen, Robert and Hazel Schumacher, and George and Florence Isaacs for their donations to the Traction Fund.

-The Steamboat Fund continues to receive an unprecedented number of donations.

## CORRECTIONS & NEW INFO

Russ Olson writes that in addition to buses for Northland Greyhound, Minnetonka Boat Works built 25-passenger parlor bus bodies for Twin City Motor Bus Co., mounted on White Model 65-A chassis in 1931-32. Also, TCMB's second #25, a 1923 White Model 50, had a body built by Wise Boat Works.

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Nick Modders caught some errors in the last Railroad Report. It was reported that leased GP7 #4133 had a throttle contact problem in the first notch. In fact, the trouble was the idle being set too low, causing the engine to occasionally stall when placed under load. The reported truck spring problem on Lackawanna coach #2232 turned out to be a build up of foreign material in the center casting, and this has been corrected. Finally, the last report

implied that Ward Gilkerson was the sole person conducting tests of locomotive engineers. In accordance with FRA regs, the tests are done by three Supervisors of Engineers under the direction of Nick, who is Road Foreman of Engineers.

## NEW LOOK FOR THE MINNEGAZZETTE

With this issue, readers will notice some changes in the graphic look of the magazine. Gone are the four-sided page borders. They have been replaced by a single top border. The new look is modeled after "Twin City Lines-The 1940's". Production Editor Sandy Bergman and I discovered that removing the borders makes the page format much more flexible. Photos can bleed to the edge of interior pages and run across the fold, and the result is freedom from the old two-photos-per-page lockstep. It also increases usable page space. Finally, we have changed the caption type face from Helvetica to Flyer. I think it looks classier. Hope you like the changes.

## OBITUARY

Ray Bensen, Sr. died on August 27th at age 83. A retired Soo Line clerk, Ray was active in the Minnesota Railfans Assn. He was the first Chairman of the MRA's Transportation Museum Committee, which led to the creation of MTM. Ray was a charter member of MTM. He did every job at Lake Harriet for many years, including operating, car cleaning, cashiering and trackwork. There was a time when Ray was the sub of last resort to fill open shifts. For years he and his wife, Margaret, also an active volunteer, hosted the MinneGazette "stuffing sessions" at his house. He is survived by his son, Ray Bensen, Jr., also a long time MTM member for many years. The family has asked that memorials go to MTM.

**Front and rear covers: Full steam ahead! On the morning of September 1st, the Minnehaha makes her triumphant return to the waters of Lake Minnetonka. For more on the launch and the sea trials, see page 12. Stan Straley photos.**

**Inside front cover: The Chicago, St. Paul Minneapolis & Omaha may have been a subsidiary of C&NW, but to an extent kept its own identity. One way was rostering the three largest Pacifics on any railroad. They had no C&NW counterparts. Here #600 accelerates away from the St. Paul Union Depot. MTM collection.**



## CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

-John Diers

### Accomplishments great and small

It is always useful to step back and reflect on what the museum has achieved. Those of us who are very active get so close to the projects that it's easy to take our progress for granted. We shouldn't, because what we have done is significant by any measure. The fact that an all-volunteer organization did it is all the more remarkable. So step back and consider the accomplishments of the last year, great and small.

The Steamboat Minnehaha has reappeared like a vision in Excelsior Bay. **Bill Graham** said it best on September 1st, the day of the first foray out into the lake. "It's like I'm looking at an old photo, but it's in color!". **Leo Meloche** would be the first to say that the job is a long way from being done, but what an accomplishment to have the boat in the water.

Meanwhile in Excelsior, the groundwork has been laid for the construction of MTM's second streetcar line. The carbarn is expected to be built this fall, and streetcar #1239 will be moved there to begin its restoration.

At Osceola, the depot restoration is complete, at least the ISTEAF-funded portion of it. Although the project belongs to the Osceola Historical Society, MTM has played a supporting role and will continue to do so. The depot is the perfect setting for an historic passenger train. MTM members can help furnish the depot authentically by contributing items listed by **Bill Marshall** on page 11 of this issue.

Thanks to the hard work of the Railroad Division volunteers, Great Northern coach #1213 looks like a million bucks, diesels #102 and #015 steamer #328 are back in service and the Store on the Train is open for business.

There is now a plan for the Jackson Street Roundhouse, which was in limbo for some time. Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of **Art Pew**, the mortgage has been reduced by 22% in the last year, bringing full ownership of the property within reach.

In the Traction Division, accomplishments tend to be smaller and more incremental, but just as satisfying. With its new interactive displays, the Linden Hills depot is the interpretive example for the rest of the museum to follow. Car #1300 has a new roof, #265 a new compressor, and PCC #322's five-year

restoration continues right on schedule.

"Twin City Lines-The 1940's" has been published. There is a new museum wide brochure and a new brochure for triple combine #1102.

And we hosted a memorable ARM national convention. This is only a partial list of what we did in the last 12 months. The point is that we in MTM have a great deal to be proud of, and the next year promises even more.

### Voices from the past

I wrote a column in the Fall 1991 Minnegazette about how our museum provides opportunities for time travel, often when you least expect it. A good example occurred when "Twin City Lines-The 1940's" received a blurb in the Star-Tribune. Over 200 orders were mailed in, most from senior citizens.

Given that transportation history is supposed to be primarily a "masculine" interest, I was surprised to learn that most of the orders were from women. Quite a few wrote notes, explaining that their husbands, fathers and other relatives had worked for the streetcar company. One had met her husband on the Inter-campus Special when they attended the U of M.

However, it is clear from the notes that the women were tied to the streetcars by more than family relationships. Here are some quotes:

"I remember those lovely streetcars and the streetcar plows during the 1940 Armistice Day storm."

"Just loved those streetcars."

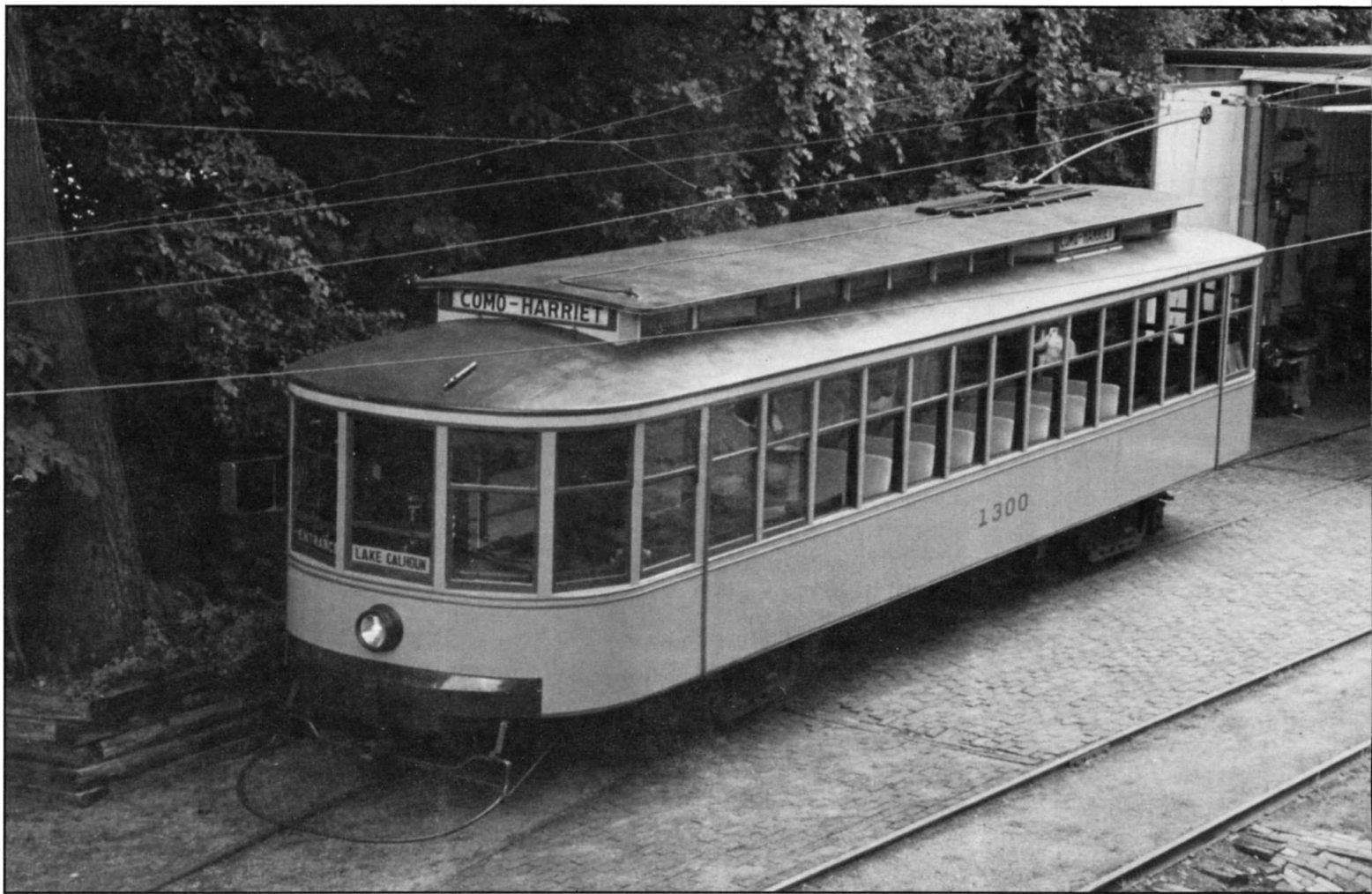
"I grew up on streetcars in Duluth and the Twin Cities."

"I'm particularly interested and



Here are two surviving remnants of the Northern Pacific in East Grand Forks. Q3 Pacific #2153 sits in the park, and a roofing company occupies the old roundhouse nearby. The modern depot also still stands. Aaron Isaacs photos.





**#1300 displays its new roof. It's hard to see in this picture, but the clerestory sides and the letterboard above the windows have been painted in a somewhat lighter, less orange yellow. The new color matches original paint uncovered during stripping. Louis Hoffman photo.**

hopeful that the (cover) picture of 7th & Hennepin is clearer in the book (than in the newspaper) as I worked 6 ½ years for Liggett Drug Store on that corner beginning in 1944. The streetcars were a vital part of my life then."

And there was one gentleman who drove streetcar out of East Side. He wrote that he married one of the World War II conductorettes, and that his first solo trip as a motorman was on car #1300. Time travel when you least expect it.

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**June 1995**

The Board did not meet.

**July 1995**

-Approved the Jackson Street budget.

-Approved a Board retreat to discuss the future of the Osceola railway.

**August 1995**

The Board did not meet.

**September 1995**

The Board did not meet.

## TRACTION REPORT

-Louis Hoffman

### Annual Appeal

The first Traction Division Annual Appeal was not in the last Minnegazette, as I reported in that issue. Instead, because of the plethora of inserts with the Minnegazette, it was mailed out with the subsequent Microgazette. Thanks to those of you who have made donations to date. A complete list will be in the next Minnegazette. If you haven't given yet, please consider even a small donation. Every dollar helps the important - and increasingly expensive - work we do at Lake Harriet.

Additional donations to the Annual Appeal have been received from **Dick and Carol Fish, Lyndon and Ruth Benson, Dewey and Marietta Hassig, Debra Wood, Loren Martin, Louis Hoffman, Keith Lindberg, Bill Herzog, Ray and Ruth Hopper, Doug Hultgren, Stuart Powers and George and Florence Isaacs.**

### CHSL voted "Best Trolley Ride"

The July issue of Minnesota Parent magazine voted our streetcar line to be the best trolley ride in the Twin Cities. True, it's the only trolley ride in the Twin Cities (we, of course, don't consider the buses that masquerade as trolleys in the two downtowns to be trolleys) until the Excelsior line opens. We're an attraction worth bringing the kids of all ages to, as this description makes clear: "Some families denote the changes in the seasons by the calendar; our family knows it's summer when we can hear the rumbling of the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line near Lake Harriet. Four splendidly restored streetcars from the early 1900's take riders on a short jaunt from lake to lake, with enthusiastic volunteers offering historical tidbits. My kids would ride every day if we let them." The article featured a large photo of #78 at the Linden Hills Depot with **Peter Sussman** as the motorman. Thanks to Minnesota Parent for its kind words.

## Ray Bensen, Sr.

The Traction Division notes with great sadness the death of longtime member and volunteer **Ray Bensen, Sr.** on August 27. Ray was one of the original members of the Museum and was in the celebrated photo of #1300 and #1776 at the Brookside Loop on June 19, 1954 on the day-after-abandonment fantrip. Even in his later years, after he had retired from operations, Ray continued to serve the Traction Division as a cashier and depot agent.

## What makes it worthwhile- Listening to the boss

Every now and then, we receive recognition from our passengers that lets us know what a valuable service we provide to the community. Earlier this year, I was working as the station agent at the Linden Hills Depot. A couple walked in. The woman was a teacher and had questions about chartering streetcars. Her class was studying American history and had seen films of streetcars. Of course, actually riding aboard a chartered streetcar would be the ideal way for the students to really learn about them. There was a problem: they could only come on Wednesday. Charters are normally scheduled on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays to conserve limited mid-week volunteer resources. We made an exception and have reaped the rewards. Several weeks after the charter, we received letters from the teacher and six of her students, thanking us for accommodating them and telling us what a wonderful time they all had. We have a group of happy customers who will come back with their parents and their friends.

Those of us who go to Board meetings see the large posters at MCTO's Heywood Office Building proclaiming the passenger as "The New Boss." We at MTM must also remember that our passengers are our new boss. We need to go just a little bit out of the way to accommodate them, to answer their questions, and to make their visit memorable. That may mean opening the Linden Hills Depot on a night that it's not staffed to let someone look around or answering a question or even listening to someone's reminiscences about the streetcar era. If we can do that, they'll be back, they'll tell others about us, and they'll bring others back with them on their next visit.

Playing streetcar is only our hobby. For that reason, it should be fun. But our hobby depends on having 40,000 or



**After much work by volunteer MCTO mechanics, bus #1399 feels much better, thank you. It was out for the Linden Hills Art Fair. Louis Hoffman photo.**

more passengers riding the streetcars each year. We can ensure that only by keeping our new bosses happy so that they come back and bring and tell their friends about us.

## Engineering Department

Because of a shortage of quality relay ties, other commitments on the part of our contractor, and tight Traction Division finances, the remainder of our 1995 tie replacement program was not completed this year as planned. Beginning this fall and continuing into next spring, however, a number of very necessary improvements to the track are planned. On the schedule is tamping the ties set this summer, replacing several rails, tightening all bolts, replacing worn or broken hardware, beginning the process of standardizing (what?) track hardware, and, if funds allow, replacing and tamping a number of ties. Thanks to the volunteers and to **Ken Benedict** and Railroad Specialties for all of this work.

Next year, we expect to replace as many ties as possible. Next fall, when the line is shut down for car barn construction and our ISTEAF funds are at hand, the 42nd Street crossing and the north and south siding switches will be replaced. In addition, the car barn switch and leads will be rebuilt and possibly extended to facilitate cleaning, outdoor work, and switching of up to five streetcars. The amount of work actually completed will depend on how far the money goes.

Some - but not all - of this expensive work has been or will be funded by ISTEAF and existing Traction Division funds. To complete this important work, these funds must be augmented by your donations to the Annual Appeal. In future years, we'll be on our

own as our ISTEAF funds will be spent, making your donation to the Annual Appeal this year and in subsequent years even more important.

Plans are in the works for the reappearance of regular track crews on Saturday mornings not only in the spring but also in the fall to keep up with the work that needs to be done. If you can, please volunteer for track work.

Our efforts have been given an important shot-in-the-arm by a generous donation. **Paul Webster** of Webster Lumber is supplying all of the ties we will need to accomplish this work and the eventual replacement of most ties along the line. The Traction Division extends its most sincere thanks to Mr. Webster for his generous donation.

**Scott Heiderich** succeeded **Bill Graham** in August and is serving as Acting Chief Engineering Officer. Scott, a long-time member, is a former Vice President of Traction under the old by-laws and Traction Division Roadmaster. My thanks to Scott for taking on this important job and to Bill for all of his hard work.

## Mechanical Department

After much work by a small cadre of dedicated volunteers, #1300 returned to service on July 22 sporting a shiny, brand new roof. Thanks to **John Cochran**, **Mark Digre**, Mechanical Foreman **Karl Jones**, Chief Mechanical Officer **Mike Miller**, **Russ Olson**, Mechanical Foreman **John Prestholdt**, **Michael Sciortino**, **Terry Warner**, and **Debbie Wood**.

With #1300 holding down Thursday through Sunday service, Senior Mechanical Foreman **George Isaacs**, assisted by **Roy Harvey**, **Russ Olson**, and Mechanical Foremen **John Prestholdt** and **Walt Strobel**, rebuilt a



spare air compressor and replaced #265's ailing compressor with the rebuilt one. In addition, **Karl Jones** took advantage of #265's residence in the Maintenance Barn in the late summer and fall to work on refinishing #265's platform floors.

Before all of this work was completed, in late June, the Traction Division weathered a "mini crisis." #1300 was still in the maintenance barn, painting not completed and dirty from many months of dusty work. It was a busy Saturday evening. #265 was leaking oil from its air compressor, making noises unusual even for its ailing compressor, and smelling like something definitely was wrong. #265 came out of service and #78 filled in that evening and on the next day, running as scheduled on the following Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. **Walt Strobel** diagnosed the problem and repaired it in time for #265 to return to the equipment rotation as scheduled on the following Thursday. Although #78's small capacity was a problem on heavily patronized weekend trips, operations carried on. The next time you wonder why a one-mile streetcar line needs three (soon to be four) streetcars, here is your answer.

The preliminary plan for this winter is to work on #265 in the warmth of the maintenance barn for the remainder of the operating season. This work will include refinishing floors and worn woodwork. After the end of the season, #1300 will move into the maintenance barn with plans to paint the remainder of the body and refinish worn woodwork. Watch for more details in the next Minnegazette. Or, better yet, stop by on any Wednesday evening or on the first and third Saturday of each month and lend a hand. It may be cold outside, but the carbarn is always warm.

#### Motor Bus Department

Thanks to the hard work of **Tony Kolnik** and others at MCTO, #1399 returned to service in time for the Betsy-Tacy Society tour on July 7. Unfortunately, at the first stop, Fort Snelling, the engine was turned off. When the group prepared to leave, it wouldn't re-start. Several weeks later, the starter repaired, #1399 performed flawlessly during the Linden Hills Art Party. Thanks to **Doug Anderson**, **Joel Gensler**, **Al Jensen**, and **Jim Otto** for driving.

Discussions with MCTO on the return to service of GMC "new look" #103 were still underway when this issue of the Minnegazette went to press. We

really do hope to have more details in the next issue. If all goes well, look for #103 joining #1399 in service during next year's Linden Hills Festival, probably still in faded MTC tomato red paint. The aqua and chrome color scheme will have to wait until there's money available.

This winter, we plan to contact the Mack Corporation and local Mack dealers in an effort to have the Mack rebuilt or repowered. Anyone with any connections at Mack or with any other ideas? If so, please call **Al Jensen**.

The remainder of the fleet, the Yellow, GM 5105's #1303 and its two companions, and AM General #1488, are securely tarped. The two unidentified 5105's will be scrapped next year and we hope to deal with #1488 (replacing broken windows, getting it started, and moving it to indoor storage at Ryder) yet this year or in 1996. Because the Yellow is not a Minnesota artifact and is way down the priority list of bus projects a sale is pending to another museum who can give it a better home.

#### Passenger Services Department

Despite the bus breakdown, the Betsy-Tacy tour was a resounding success. As a token of goodwill, partial refunds of \$5 were sent to each of the participants. One returned her check with a note saying, "I had a marvelous time on your trip, and despite the bus breakdown - all was handled graciously. Please use this check for your Museum." Another said, "...all of you at the Transportation Museum were so

friendly and informative. The trolley and station are beautiful. My only regret is that we could not spend more time on the trolley."

Thanks to **Maryellen Digre-Mueller** for organizing the event, to **Corbin Kidder** for holding down the fort at the Minnehaha Depot, to **Gwen Gerthe** of the Betsy-Tacy Society for handling the lunches at Minnehaha Park, to **Steve Osman** at Fort Snelling for assistance above and beyond the call of duty, to the streetcar crew of foreman **Roy Harvey**, operator **Mark Digre**, and depot agent **Louis Hoffman**, to bus driver **Nick Modders**, to Connor's Bakery and Deli at Penn and 54th for delicious box lunches, and to the MCTO, especially **Tony Kolnik** and driver No. 1455, for arriving promptly to try and fix #1399 and coming to our rescue with a Gillig bus to finish the tour, and to **Pat Harvey** and **Sara Modders** for providing moral support on a trying day.

#### Minnehaha Depot

The Museum has taken the plunge into academia. This summer, the University of Minnesota's Compleat Scholar program offered a course entitled "Little Treasures: Less Known Museums in the Twin Cities." On July 13, the class took up the topic of maintenance and interpretation of historic sites and houses, visiting the **John H. Stevens House**, our neighbor in Minnehaha Park, and the Minnehaha Depot. Representing the Museum was our stationmaster at the Princess, **Corbin Kidder**.



The car cleaning crew at work. At left is **Terry Warner**. **Louis Hoffman** photo.



## Trolleys In The News

Without much work on our part, the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line has been in the news. As noted above, we were featured prominently in the July Minnesota Parent.

In addition, we have been listed regularly under "Attractions" in the Friday "This Weekend" and Sunday "Eight Days Out" listings in the Star Tribune's Variety section. On August 27, under "FYI" the Variety section noted that daily streetcar operations had but one week to go. The tidbit, entitled "Good golly, Miss Trolley," included a color photo of #78. Thanks to our good friends at the Star Tribune.

Finally, a brief glimpse of the line, with **Blair Dollery** standing next to a standard car, appears in a KARE 11 commercial featuring meteorologist **Ken Barlow**. Thanks to our good friends at KARE 11.

## Twin City Lines: The 1940s — A Best Seller

"Twin City Lines: The 1940s", the Traction Division's new 40-page snapshot of the Twin City Lines in its last decade of greatness, is selling like hotcakes. Sales were brisk at the Linden Hills Depot and continue to be strong in area hobby shops and at the Minnesota History Center's museum store. Sales were boosted by prominent mention on page one of the August 15 Variety section of the Star Tribune, complete with the color cover. Within a week of the article's appearance, over 200 mail

order requests were in the mailbox. By the time you read this, it will also be in stock at local Barnes and Noble bookstores and B. Dalton. Get your copy there, at the History Center, at your local hobby shop, by mail for \$10.00 (write to **Aaron Isaacs** at 3816 Vincent Ave. So., Minneapolis, MN 55410), or at the Linden Hills Depot for \$8.00 once the season begins.

## Safety and Training Department

The following individuals passed the 1995 Safety and Training Program and are qualified to operate #265 and #1300: **Charles Barthold, John Cochran, Dave Culver, Mark Digre, Brian Hayes, Dwight Hendricks, Jim Hewitt, Harry McPeak, and Jim Vaitkunas**. Charles volunteered as a station agent for the previous two seasons. John, Brian, and Mark have volunteered in the Mechanical Department, Brian on the PCC and John and Mark at Linden Hills Shops. Dwight is a former member who volunteered in the line's early years and has returned to the fold. He also presented a seminar on fundraising at the ARM convention. Jim assisted with the ARM convention as well, providing computerized lists of attendees by event as well as badges. Welcome to all of you and thanks for volunteering.

With the August Transportation Department schedule, all operators received a Foreman Check List. Two pages in length, it is a start-to-end list of the foreman's duties. This is a first step in the systematic rewrite of the Traction division's rulebook, incorporating

numerous bulletins, operating notes, and superintendent's notes into a well-organized rule book.

## Transportation Department

Every now and then, the Transportation Department schedule is published with gaping holes in it: shifts without foremen, no operators or only one, and weekend shifts with no station agents. I want to thank those of you who have pitched in to make a shift possible, fill out a crew, and keep the depot open. This list isn't complete, but the people I've noticed who have pitched in are **Keith Anderson, Mike Buck, Harold Dalland, John DeWitt, Bill Graham, Gary Gustafson, Roy Harvey, Jeanne Inselman, John Kennedy, Mike Miller, Michael Sciortino and Terry Warner**. In early August and again in early September, lack of volunteers had the potential of causing the cancellation of a total of four shifts, a Friday night and second shift on Saturday on both occasions. Eight volunteers who stepped in quite literally at the last minute allowed us to carry more than 2,000 passengers we otherwise would have lost had shifts been canceled for want of a foreman or lack of crew. Thanks to **Keith, Harold, John De Witt, Gary, Roy, Jeanne, John Kennedy, and Mike** for pitching in at the last minute. A tip of the motorman's cap to these stalwart volunteers and to the entire CHSL crew.

## Congratulations to the Steamboat Division

The emergence of the Minnehaha from the boat building and her launching are well documented in this Minnegazette. However, having just returned from an afternoon in Excelsior, during which I saw the nearly completed vessel, resplendent in TCRT yellow, shining in the afternoon sun, I wanted to take this opportunity to welcome the Minnehaha to the Museum's operating fleet and congratulate the Steamboat Division volunteers on a job well done on behalf of all of us in the Traction Division.

## PCC Update

### -George Isaacs

The grunt work on the PCC is pretty much finished. The volunteer crew from MCTO, consisting of **Jan Homan, Ken Braun, Greg Stigen** and retiree **Eldon "Pete" Peterson** have finally trained the twisted front anticlimber so that it fits neatly under the bottom edge of the front dasher.

**This fine example of cold war thinking was recently discovered and placed in #1399. Get under your desk and put your head between your knees. Louis Hoffman photo.**



## RAILROAD REPORT

## Retreat held on future of the Osceola Railway

On August 23rd, a special retreat was called by the MTM Board of Trustees to discuss the railway's future. Attending were members of the MTM Board, officials from the MTM Railroad Division, members of the Osceola & St. Croix Valley Ry. Board, and representatives from the Osceola Historical Society. The purpose of the meeting was to defuse the tension that had been developing between the OSV Board and the Railroad Division. A professional facilitator ran the meeting.

Both sides brought grievances to the meeting. The Railroad Division disliked being relegated to a "contract operator" role, and felt they didn't have a say in how the railway is run, especially such functions as marketing. The Railway Board was dissatisfied with the Railroad Division's ability to provide the needed equipment to handle fall colors crowds, and disapproved of informal passenger operations by the Railroad Division. The facilitator used various methods to explore the issues and to establish everyone's vision of what the railway should be.

After much discussion, there was general agreement on most issues. All present envisioned running a tourist

All of the side trim pieces for the front and rear door openings have been cut to fit and screwed into place. A special thanks goes to recent MTM member **Lowell Strombeck**, who fabricated the trim sheetmetal. He worked after hours at Onan, where he is a model shop worker. I hate to think what those pieces would have cost from a sheet metal shop.

We are planning to sandblast and prime paint the body below the roof line sometime in October or early November. To that end, foremen **John DeWitt**, **Gary Gensler** and **Joel Gensler** have cut up ½ inch chipboard and miscellaneous plywood to mask all of the body openings. After the priming, there will have to be body preparation to achieve a smooth surface for the final coats of paint.

The tracing of wiring and running of new wiring in the braking circuit has started. **Alan Anderson** made the task easier by putting the braking and other auxiliary circuits on a computer generated schematic diagram permitting easy changes. Alan, together with **Brian Hayes** and **Keith Lindberg**, have been eating their brains out resolving the existing wiring on the car with our TCRT diagrams. There were a lot of changes made when Cleveland added automatic train stop. We can use a few more good electrical persons to spell our regulars.

New to the PCC effort are **Michael J. Miller** and **Jim Muecke**. This pair have been checking out all of the electrical contactors against the published specifications. In addition they have been testing the insulation-resistance (Meggering) of all the high voltage (600 volt) wiring. Mike has also taken on the job of rebuilding the operator's gang switch and is doing a great job.

At this time I have to give recognition to those in addition to the aforementioned who have worked on the car in 1995. They are **Keith Anderson**, **John Dillery**, **Bill Gingerich**, **Bill Graham**, **Nils Halker**, **Jim Harrison**, **Roy Harvey**, **Scott Heiderich**, **Dale Hromadko**, **John Kennedy**, **Corbin Kidder**, **Charles McCarthy**, **Barney Olsen**, **Russ Olson**, **Norm Podas**, **John Prestholdt**, **Phil Settergren**, **John Skooglun**, **Dwight Stephens**, **Walt Strobel**, **Terry Warner**, **Lowell Wood** and MCTO welder **Howie Melco**. I hope I haven't forgotten anyone.

Finally, I would like to hear from a sheetmetal worker who would be willing to repair and/or fabricate sheetmetal parts for the PCC. Please call me at 484-7512.



During September, two trains ran simultaneously. The diesel train to Marine (above) featured the three Great Lakes Western rented cars, and is shown just north of the draw bridge. The steam train had an all-open window consist. Note the awnings reinstalled on the Osceola depot. Bill Graham photos.





railroad that is as historically accurate as it can be, given the limits of money and available rolling stock. All agreed that revenue should be maximized to provide the funds needed to get closer to historic accuracy. There was some disagreement over the rate of growth and the addition of new services. In this area the OSV Board was more proactive and the Railroad Division more conservative.

In the end, there was unanimous agreement that all decision making affecting the Osceola operation should take place in a single forum, probably the OSV Board. As this is written, a committee has been named to meet and recommend how to do this.

### Renting Passenger Cars

MTM is renting several passenger cars from Great Lakes Western Tours to help get through the fall peak season. GN business car #A-11 ran into delays getting repaired at the Soo/CP Rail Shoreham Shops, and first class cars were needed to meet existing charter reservations. MTM Trustee **John Walker** worked with **Todd Rust** and **Dick Fish** to bring in the equipment, which arrived in August. Included are:

Chicago Burlington & Quincy stainless steel diner Silver Pheasant. Built in 1939, it was a pool car that sometimes ran on the Twin Zephyrs. It seats 48 people at tables and has been used for coach and first class passengers.

The kitchen is fully operational.

Seaboard Air Line mid-train lounge. Built as a coach in 1954, it was converted to a lounge recently, and is painted in C&NW colors.

Chicago & Northwestern rebuilt heavyweight open platform business car #404. Unlike #A-11, which seats 27 in its lounge, #404 is mostly staterooms and seats only eight in the lounge, plus eight more in the dining area. Built as the Pullman sleeper Captiol Roads in 1926 it worked on the Baltimore and Ohio. It was later acquired by the C&NW who rebuilt it in 1948 as a business car. It was further remodeled in 1980 and assigned to **Ed Burkhardt**, then a C&NW vice president.

### Equipment

After a summer of inspections and repairs, steam engine #328 traveled to Osceola under its own power and spent the month of September pulling three Dresser trips per weekend day. This is an increase from last year, when it mostly ran on Saturdays only.

Diesel #102 was the passenger engine for much of the summer and performed well, with the arrival of #105, #102 was taken out of service and drained.

#105 returned to Osceola in September, having received new wheels, an upgrade to roller bearings on all axles, a repaired front coupler pocket and a speedometer at BN's Northtown shop.

As this is written, GN coach #1213 is being painted.

Business car #A-11's repairs were delayed because the correct replacement wheels were unavailable at the time.

### How our visitors see us

OSV car attendants invite our passengers to fill out comment cards that tell where they come from and what they think of the train. **Marcia Diers** and **Pat Kytola** have compiled all the comments. They are overwhelmingly positive, with a few suggestions mixed in. Here is a sample:

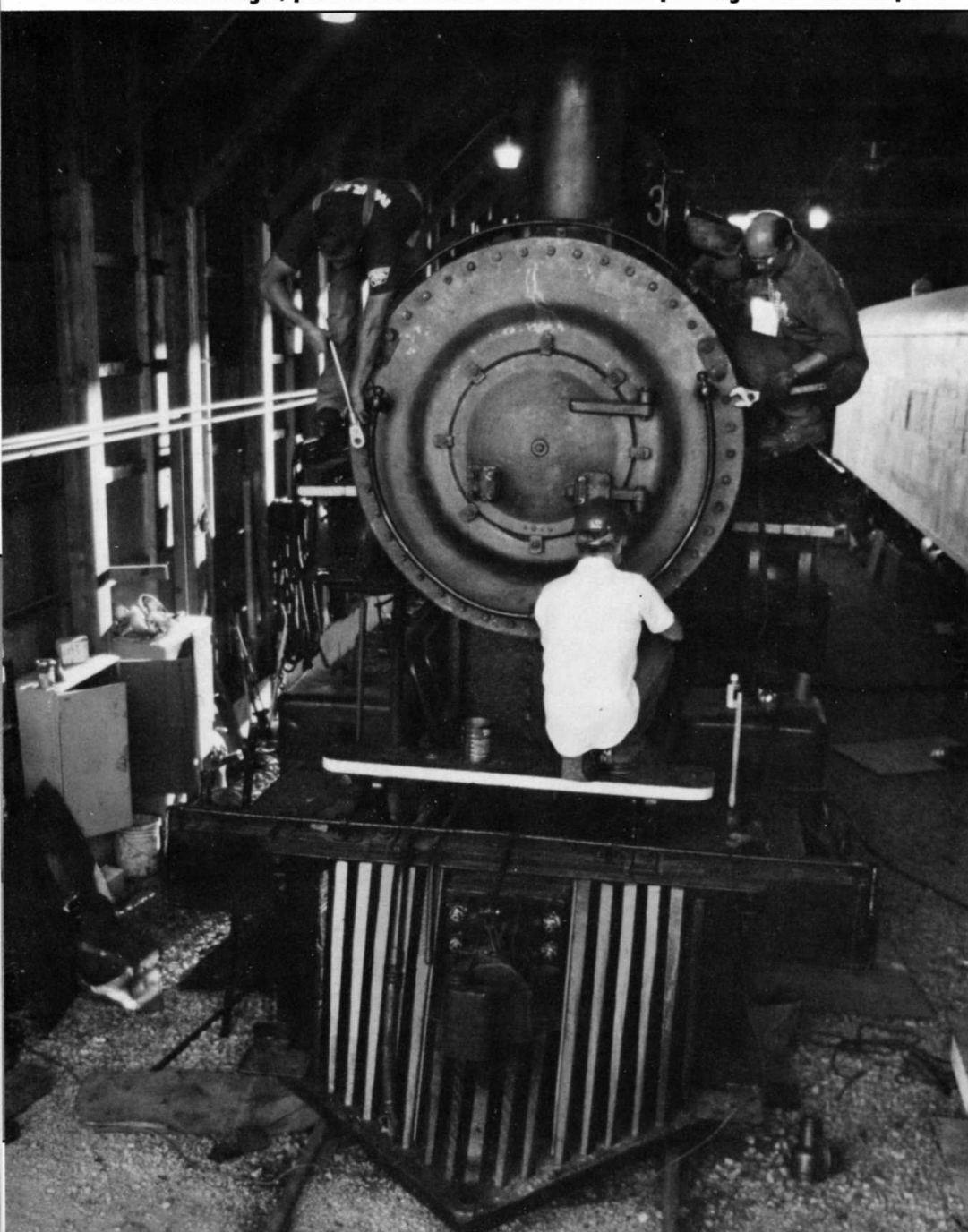
*Very informative comments about history and use of railroads. You might consider more detailed comments about rocks exposed and general geology of region. A really good experience.*

*Enjoyed the trip very much. Very informative. Amazed because of all the volunteers.*

*Best excursion train ever! Wonderful volunteers.*

*I'm glad you have a train for me to ride. I have lots of train books and toy trains. I liked the ride—it was fun. I'll be back.*

**John Peters (l), Keith Skievik (c) and Mike Mattson minister to #328 this summer. That's coach #1213 at right, primed and masked for final exterior painting. Benn Coifman photo.**





*It was very enjoyable, and good to have the train to bring the kids on.*

*This was a wonderful, peaceful ride. Our little girl fell asleep, but we all enjoyed it!*

*The kids love the train. We plan to ride the train in September.*

*A memorable vacation trip.*

*It was a very enjoyable ride and we enjoyed knowing details about the train and history. We would have liked even more details.*

*Fun! Loved the train whistle.*

*Nice—friendly, never too old to enjoy a train ride and see the scenery.*

*Wonderful ride—commentary very good.*

*Very friendly staff—Made my parents excited and happy!!*

*Very interesting, too bad we can't get off at the Marine depot.*

*Fun! Very friendly, talkative volunteers.*

*It was our first time. We loved it. We hope to come again.*

*Fun ride. I'm impressed—this is all done by volunteers.*

*We loved the train, and our little boy Stewart adores it. Send me membership information.*

*Possibly run a speaker system for your host/easier to hear over train noise.*

*Very nice scenic ride! Thanks for providing the opportunity for our first train ride. Keep up the good work.*

*Speaker needs a megaphone. Trip absolutely wonderful. Beautiful scenery.*

*I didn't want to tell you how old I was and your engineer looked like my boyfriend (77).*

*Keep it simple and authentic.*

*Need more souvenirs. Kid sized engineer caps.*

*As a former CNW employee, this was a treat.*

*Reminds me of the old days.*

*Great place to take company, visitors from out of state. We came with one in wheelchair and your staff were all courteous and patient. Very impressive.*

*Thank you! To see such joy and wonderment on my child's face was priceless.*

*I'm glad you're preserving history.*

*Clean and pleasant—perfect length for small children.*

*You need to clean the windows, otherwise it was great.*

*This was our second ride. We will make it a tradition to visit OSCVRY whenever we are in MN. (Tjelta, Norway)*

*Very organized, friendly service.*

*Please send membership information.*

*Need a modern restroom, video room, free souvenirs.*

*We tried to find a train for our child to ride on and this was perfect. I'm sending my in-laws here when they visit in September.*



**MTM's latest acquisition is this Great Northern steel caboose, donated by Burlington Northern. Benn Coifman photo.**

*Friendly staff, great experience for the kids—a tie into the past.*

*Personnel were knowledgeable and friendly. We liked being able to examine the equipment at our pace.*

*Interesting to see parts of our state we never knew before. Very beautiful.*

*John Schillberg was an added pleasure to listen to. Thank you John.*

*It would be nice if we could get off of train and walk around at turnaround point.*

*Glad to see pop and snacks this year.*

*Nice and clean, authentic. Courteous help. We liked George Isaacs.*

*It would really nice if you had T-shirts and sweat shirts. They would sell well.*

*It's nice to be able to move around the train. Personnel very friendly and helpful.*

*I'm glad people like you are saving part of our past. We've become too much of a disposable society.*

## YOU CAN HELP FURNISH THE OSCEOLA DEPOT

—Bill Marshall

Imagine the Osceola depot as it was in its heyday. Telegraph operator chatting in Morse with the operator in Dresser. Two sets of orders and clearances, plus a bunch of waybills and a switch list clipped to the train register book, waiting for the way freight's conductor. Tickets in the ticket cabinet ranging from several single-destination card tickets all the way up to the 3-foot monsters of those days. The regulation flagging equipment in a rack ready for immediate use, if needed. Books, forms, reports, sealing wax, etc., on the counter top to be used by the agent-telegrapher during a day's work. The old brass cuspidor on the floor. And many other things which escape the recollections of today's curious onlookers.

John Diers and Steve Stocker have asked Bob Branchaud and me to help recreate as much of a "living history" exhibit at the Osceola ticket office as we can. Elmer Johnson, retired agent-telegrapher at Osceola, has also consented to assist us.

To do this we will need the help of members of MTM, the Osceola Historical Society, Morse Telegraphers Club and Soo Line Historical Society. You can help us in a variety of ways:

- a) cash donations
- b) donations of artifacts or replicas of artifacts
- c) documents and photos (including photos of other Soo Line telegraph offices)
- d) reports and forms
- e) just plain hard work.

Below is a list of the maximum needs; however, we'll base our actual plan on what we can collect.

#### Exterior artifacts and replicas

Train order signal, blades and mechanism.

#### Telegraph equipment:

- a) 3 telegraph poles
- b) 4 eight or ten pin crossarms with green glass insulators
- c) twisted pair drop cord
- d) fourteen 150 foot lengths of #9 iron telephone/telegraph wire

#### Signs:

- a) Western Union
- b) train arrival/departure blackboard
- c) Railway Express Agency
- d) Soo Line logo
- e) Bell System (telephone)

**Waybill box with switch lock for conductors of night trains making setouts or pickups.**

#### Office telegraph equipment

- a) cash drawer
- b) sounders
- c) scissors phone (desk mounted phone on a push-in, pull-out mechanism) and pushbutton or foot pedal
- d) electronic wizard who can finish a 95% completed pair of Morse-to-phone acoustical couplers (documentation 100% completed) to enable the Osceola telegraph office to communicate by Morse to any other phone using the other pair of couplers.
- e) Prince Albert tobacco cans

#### Other office equipment

- a) cash drawer
- b) conical green lampshade over the telegrapher's desk
- c) train order signal levers
- d) authentic train order hoops and forks
- e) Western Union wall clock
- f) safe
- g) telegrapher's manual typewriter
- h) ticket stamp
- i) clip boards

#### Office furniture

- a) Three captain's chairs, complete with green glass insulators on the four legs
- b) table from the 1930 era.
- c) ticket cabinet
- d) rack for time tables and travel brochures
- e) cuspidor and rubber mat
- f) wall mail boxes for "company mail", station agent, section foreman, lineman, B&B foreman, waybills and conductors' messages
- g) rack for flagging equipment

#### Contents of flagging equipment rack

- a) 1 red and 1 clear kerosene lanterns
- b) red flag
- c) green and white flag
- d) fusees
- e) torpedoes
- f) a can of kerosene

#### Office paperwork

- a) timetables
- b) travel brochures
- c) Any reports, forms, pads, envelopes, books, etc., used at freight and passenger agencies
- d) block sheets, train register books
- e) clearance, restrictive and permissive card forms
- f) train order supplies, including clipboards, double-sided carbon paper, styluses, metal writing plates
- g) Western Union telegram blanks

#### Tickets

- a) single destination card tickets
- b) blank destination ticket forms
- c) Pullman and parlor car tickets
- d) the infamous 3-foot interline tickets

#### Reprinting replicas of office paperwork

- a) someone who has knowledge of how to obtain authority to print replicas of any office paperwork which we believe would be appropriate
- b) a printer to do the work

#### Personal artifacts

- a) green eyeshade
- b) black sleeve protectors

#### Miscellaneous

Would like someone with a wood lathe who could make a dozen "test board pegs" (dummy replicas), 1.5 inches long, half-inch dowel rod. Call **Bill Marshall** for exact dimensions and paint code.

If you can furnish anything, please call me at 729-4940 or **Bob Branchaud** at 459-1507.

## STEAMBOAT REPORT

-Bill Graham

#### The countdown to launch

The goal date for launching Minnehaha was July 23rd. Despite a heroic effort by the volunteers, this schedule proved unrealistic because several installations simply could not be completed in time. During July and August, volunteers undertook crash programs to install the upper deck canvas generously donated by **Faith Kaiser**, owner of Banner Canvas Company, and the upper deck railing supplied by **Wally Larson** of Minneapolis Cast Iron/Steel Fabricating Company. **Paul Massnick** worked overtime to manufacture the Douglas fir rub rail needed to protect the hull from collisions with the dock. **Steve Jessmer**, **Stan Straley**, **Tim Reichel** and others spent several afternoons and evenings installing it, including re-use of the original steel straps raised from the bottom of the lake. The new collapsible smoke stack, fabricated and donated by **Gilbert Mechanical Contractors**, was installed, and work continued to finish the steam plant piping.

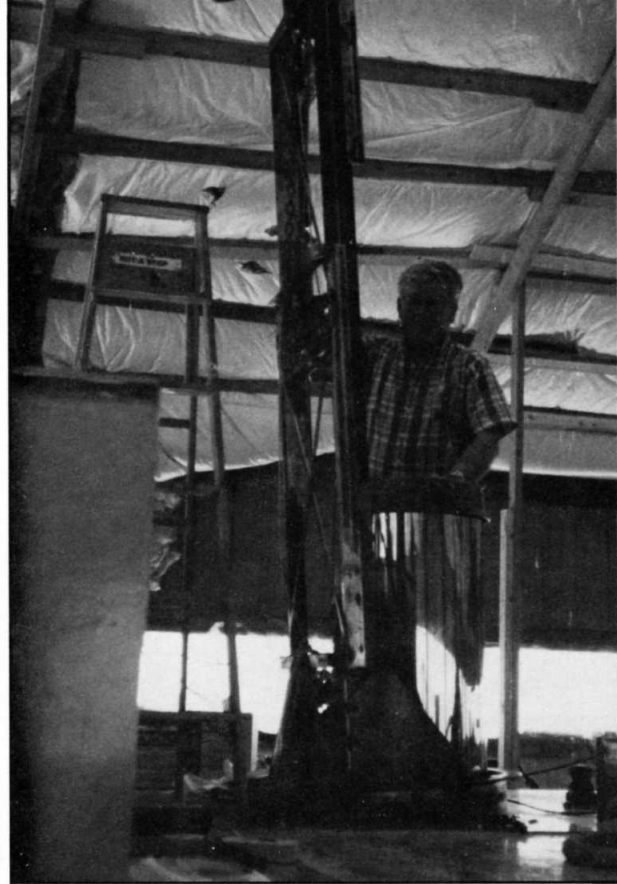
The boat had been built on the transport trailer which sat on temporary blocking. The keel had been shimmed a further nine inches at the bow to level the hull during construction. The finished 35-ton boat had to be jacked down onto the trailer by six of the huskier volunteers. **Dave Eiry** supervised the unblocking of the trailer and the preparations for pull-out. Members waded in ankle deep rain water that had run into the building to place planking to support the trailer.

Minnehaha was pulled outside the boat building on Sunday, August 6th, to the cheers of about 200 onlookers. Two days of heavy rain had made the area a muddy mess, so volunteers had to lay multiple planks to keep the trailer from tipping into the mud. The roll out gave everyone their first broadside view of Minnehaha, and all marveled at her size. Hikers and bikers on the trail exclaimed at the sight of this huge, yellow streetcar boat, and were invited to climb the ladder for one more look around inside.

The boat remained in the boat building parking lot for the next two weeks while feverish work continued to complete the exterior sufficiently for launch. Years of worried discussions about the launch procedure had centered on Minnehaha's uncertain weight and center of gravity, that she might run away down the hill into the launch area, or worse, that she might roll over due to wet ground conditions.



**Willard Morse and Doug Hultgren with one of the 13 upper deck benches that were rebuilt using all-original hardware and new wood.**



**Don Cox with the "Hijacker" or "Genie Lift" mechanism that raises and lowers the stack between five and twelve feet.**

**Jackie Robertson swabs the newly fiberglassed upper deck in preparation for installing the oxide red canvas roof. Leo Meloche photos.**

Around 20 MTM'ers assembled at 6 a.m. on Monday, August 21 for the launch. **Jeff Jensen** coupled his 1942 U.S. Army tank retriever, toting three tons of concrete for extra weight and a specially fabricated drawbar, to the boat trailer for the move to **Bill Niccum's** Minnetonka Portable Dredge Company yard. Minnehaha perched high up on her trailer clearly was a bit top-heavy and the 14 tires under the trailer showed the strain. MTM'ers fended off tree limbs from the upper railings and windows as she passed down the Hennepin County LRT trail followed by dozens of onlookers. On the upper deck, the ride felt surprisingly stable like a well-ballasted Pullman sleeper.

At the top of the steep ramp down into the dredge yard, Jeff merely downshifted the tank retriever and eased Minnehaha downgrade, even stopping halfway to plan the turn-around maneuver. Two quick back-and-forths, and Minnehaha was lined up for the launch ramp. A last examination of the hull showed her to be ship shape, and the tank retriever eased the boat trailer into the lake. She quickly floated free of the trailer, drifted toward one of Niccum's barges, and quickly was secured by 9:30 a.m. After an hour in the water, the inside of the hull

remained completely dry, testimony to 3M caulk and some excellent plank installation by MTM'ers.

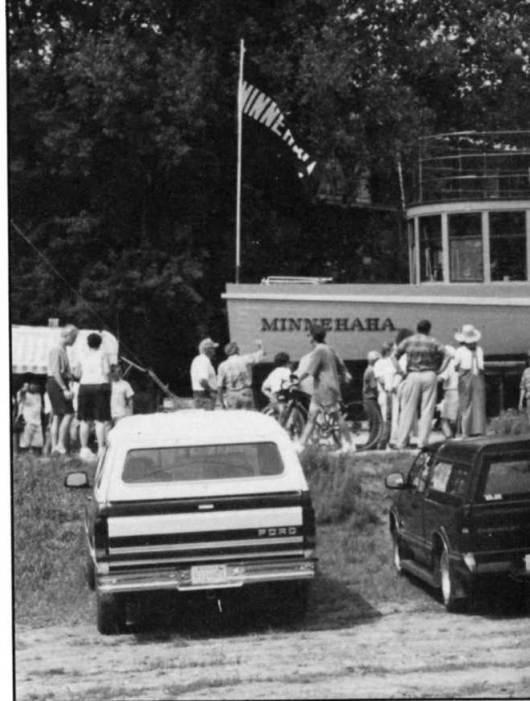
#### **Sea trials begin**

For the next two weeks, volunteers continued to work on painting, piping, installing navigation gear and test-firing the boiler. **Bill Berger, Jim Hewitt** and **Ewald "Gus" Gustavson** conducted several demonstration fire-ups for MTM's newly-licensed engineers, including test-running the main engine, the auxiliary pumps and turbines and the diesel-electric generator. It takes about 30 minutes for the modern oil-fired boiler to reach its 180-pound operating pressure, and each fire-up provided valuable learning for all concerned. After a couple hours of test steaming at the pier, **Jim Ogland** backed Minnehaha out into the dredge yard basin on the evening of Thursday, August 31, to get an idea of how she might respond to the controls.

The first sea trial began early on the bright, cool morning of Friday, September 1. **Jackie Robertson** and **Stan Straley** lent their Chris Craft cruiser for a chase boat as **Jim Ogland** again backed Minnehaha away from her pier and turned her







**Top left: On August 13th, the Minnehaha is winched out of the boat building for the first time. It was necessary to trim away pieces of the construction scaffolding to clear the hull. Jackie Robertson photo.**

**Left: Looking out from the boat building.**

**Above: Crowds of onlookers visited the Minnehaha during her first day on display outside the boat building.**

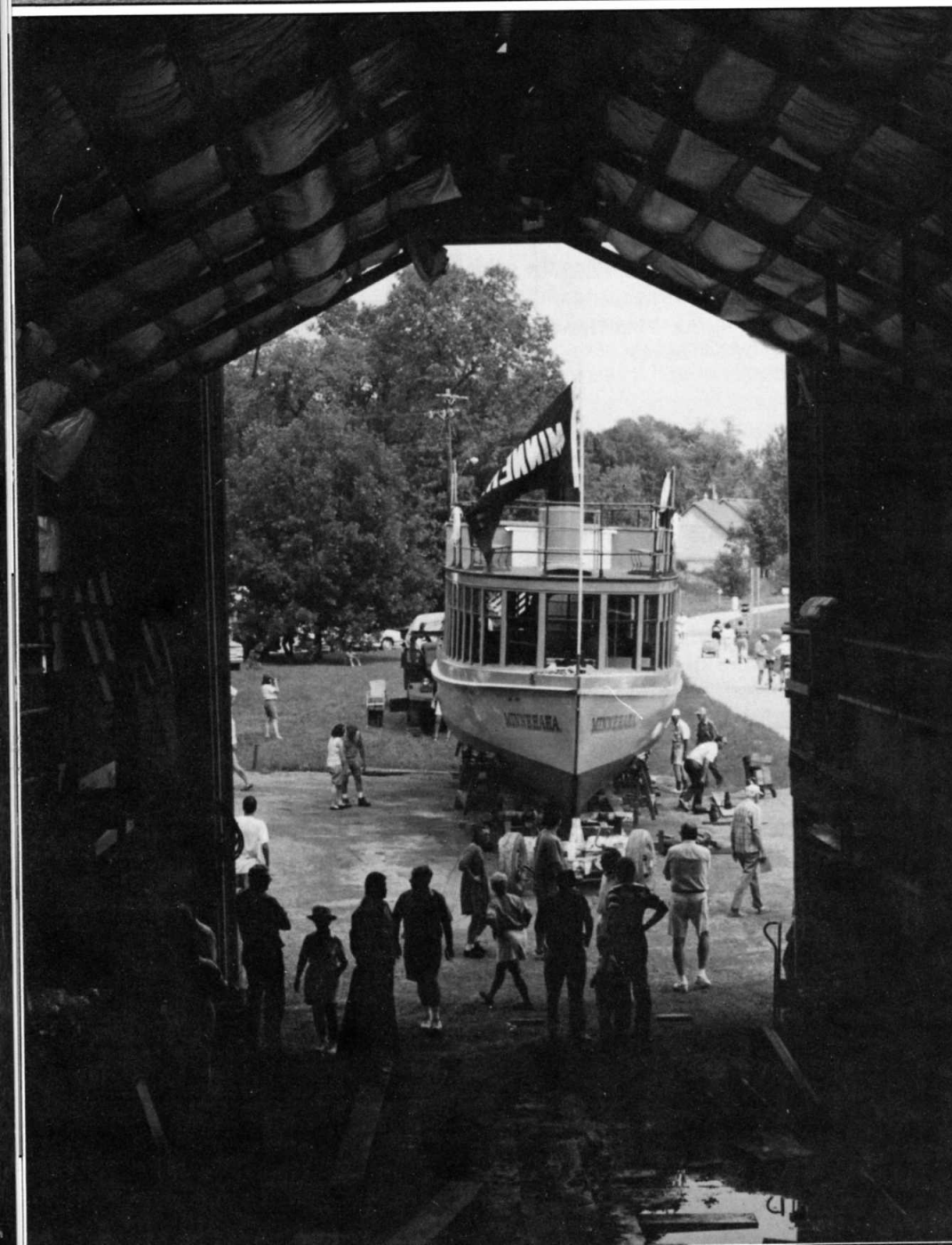
**Top right: The one-block trip from the boat building to the Minnetonka Portable Dredge yard followed the Hennepin County bike trail on the old Minneapolis & St. Louis right of way.**

**Middle right: Overhanging trees had to be pushed aside.**

**Bottom right: The boat was pulled by Jeff Jensen's 1942 U. S. Army tank retriever. Speed was dead slow, with frequent stops to assess the firmness of the trail under the wheels. Tim Reichel steered the trailer. All Jackie Robertson photos.**

toward the open lake. The moment was not lost on the 20 or so volunteers and engineer trainees who were aboard. For the first time in three generations, a TCRT express boat again was underway on Lake Minnetonka. It seemed as momentous and pleasing as engine 328's first romp on the Burlington Northern high iron 15 years ago. Everyone aboard waited with baited breath for the first glitch to occur, and they become more and more delighted as everything continued to run well.

Around the point and into Gideon's Bay, Jim tried a few slow speed turns with morning sunlight glinting on the yellow boat and the blue water. A couple private cruisers joined the flotilla as Jim called for more speed. Suddenly a





small bow wave rose as Minnehaha's propeller dug in, her speed building to her original 12 mph design speed. Passing Gale's Island, she steamed up the eastern shore of Big Island, whistling a salute to the old amusement park site as she passed. By this time about 20 private cruisers were following, their pilots shouting encouragement, and Jim asked them to fall back while he executed more turning maneuvers.

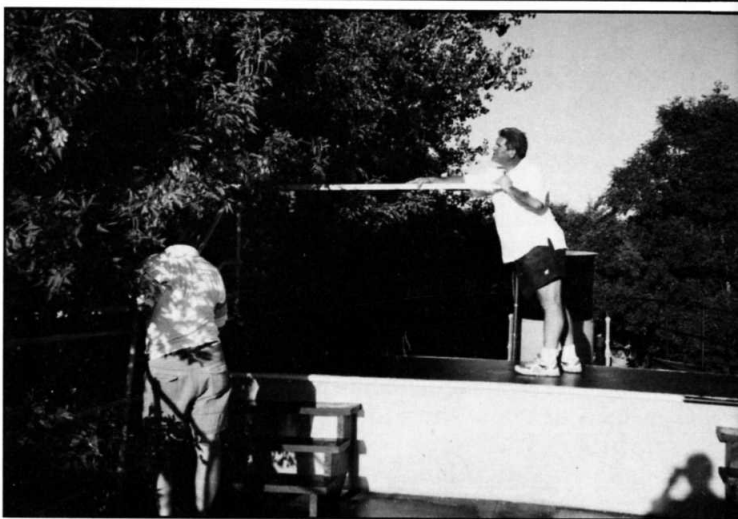
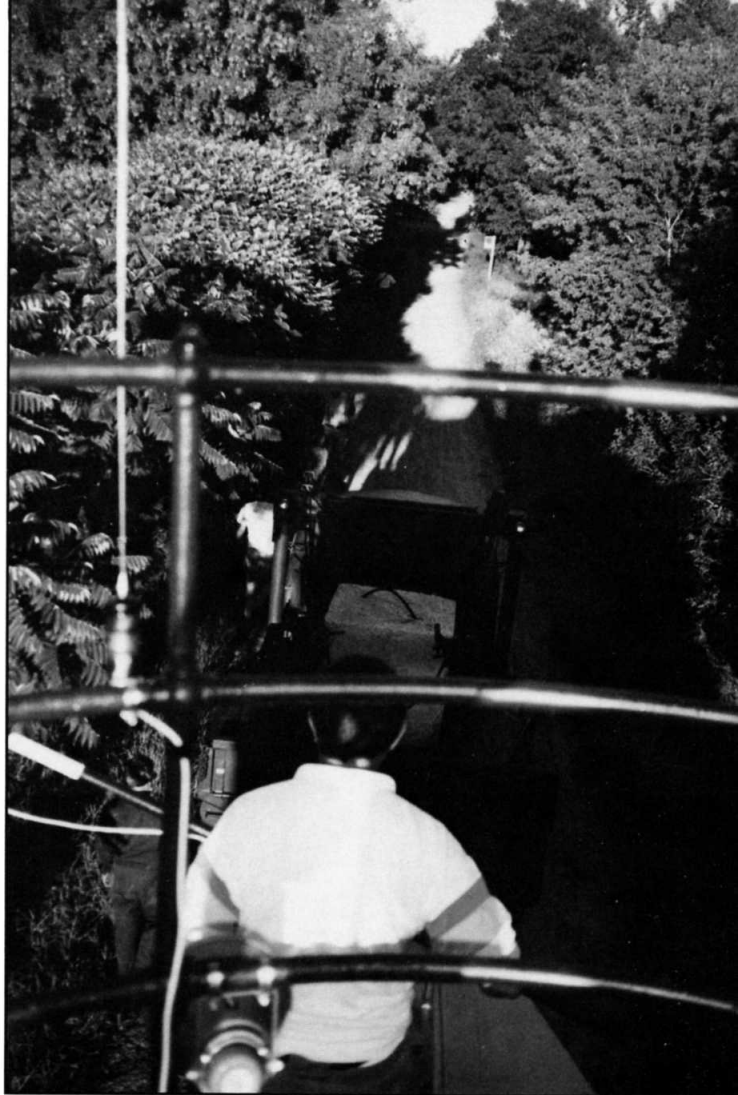
About a half mile northeast of Big Island, near where Minnehaha had lain on the bottom for so many decades, she turned once more and headed south for Excelsior having proven to all present that she was indeed "back." Those old TCRT company postcard views of streetcar boats on the lake kept appearing in the mind, except that this was the real thing happening in true living color.

Approaching the Excelsior Park Restaurant docks, she slowed as the engine became starved for steam. A diver found that a screen had been ripped from the fire protection pump water intake during the launch, and the pipe had become clogged with millfoil weed. A two-foot ball of millfoil had wrapped itself around the propeller shaft. Piping was changed to draw all intake water from the main condenser inlet and to permit steam to be blown back to clear the intakes.

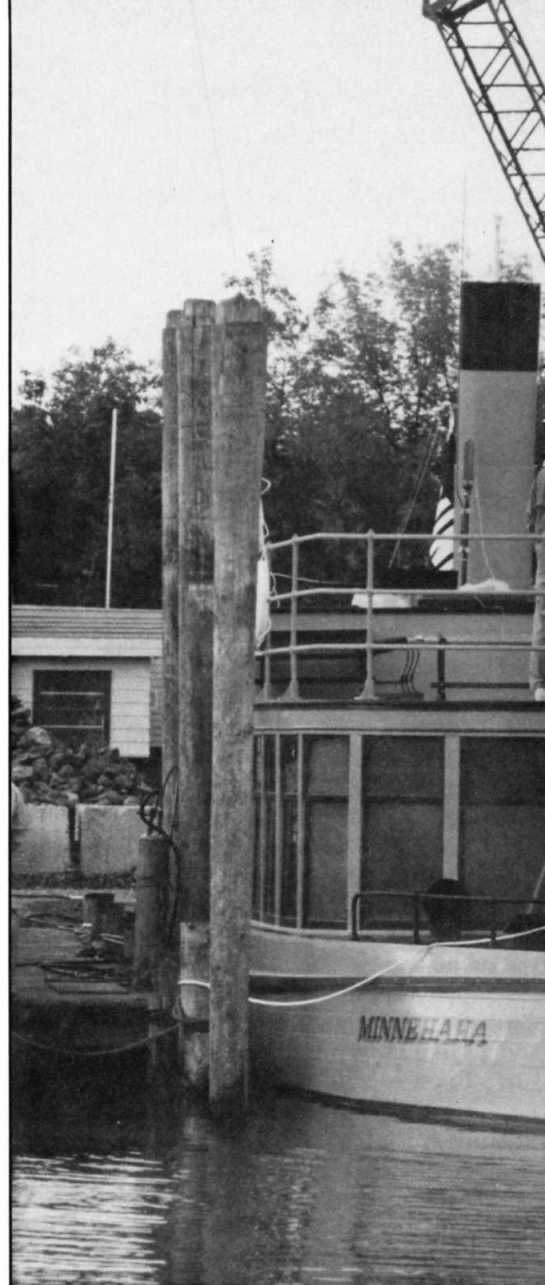
The sea trial showed that the steam turbine installed to force lake water through the condenser coil used more steam than originally thought. It had to be shut down to save steam for the main engine, and the fire protection pump was used instead to circulate the condenser. The turbine will be replaced with an electric centrifugal pump this winter.

Following a warm reception at Excelsior docks, Minnehaha limped back to the dredge yard for a bit more work. However, early on Sunday, September 3rd, she ran a flawless sea trial along the eastern shore of Big Island and back to the Excelsior Park Restaurant docks where she was be moored until early October. A program of daily trials and training runs was scheduled to thoroughly evaluate the boat's peculiarities and to give student pilots and engineers extensive time on the boat.

The initial sea trials showed that underway, Minnehaha is incredibly quiet. Inside the cabin, the blower to the oil burner produces the most noise while the engine itself runs virtually silent. The engine and auxiliary appliances are vented into the condenser rather than through the stack to the atmosphere, although steam can be vented through the stack if needed for appearance. Normally, the stack runs clear and silent with only heat waves visible. From 50 feet away, the







boat seems to be pushed by some unseen hand without audible sound, unheard of in modern times for such a large, heavy boat.

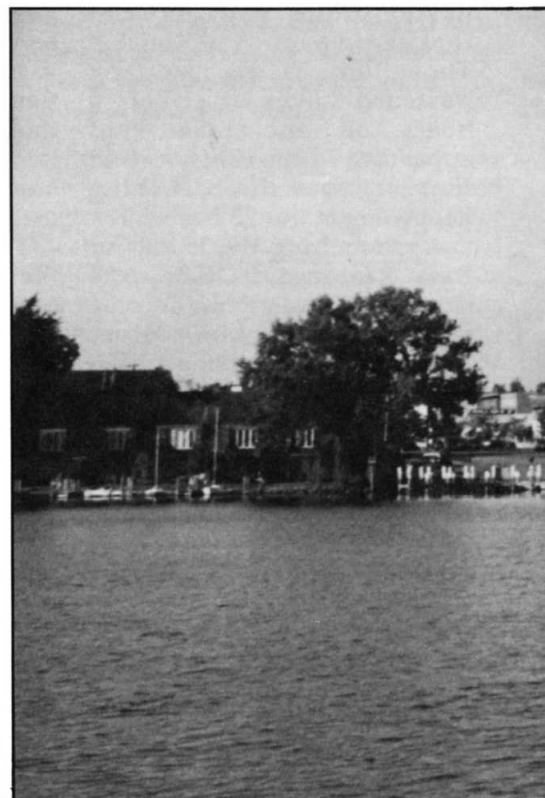
Backing up, Minnehaha runs straight instead of wandering to the left as her rightward turning engine would suggest. **Jim Ogland** reports that she maneuvers beautifully, is stable in turns and is easy to dock. On a September 6th training run, the pilot intentionally made a full speed left turn to try to create roll and the boat remained stable. Very encouraging. She stops quickly and precisely when the engine is thrown into reverse. At full speed, she produces remarkably little wake beyond the normal bow wave. This may be attributable to her torpedo-style stern like that used on late 19th Century vessels such as the battleship "Maine." Perhaps the most interesting lesson of

the sea trials is the public's reaction to her appearance underway. Many who saw her pass from the shore later visited to say how thrilled they were to see her back on the lake.

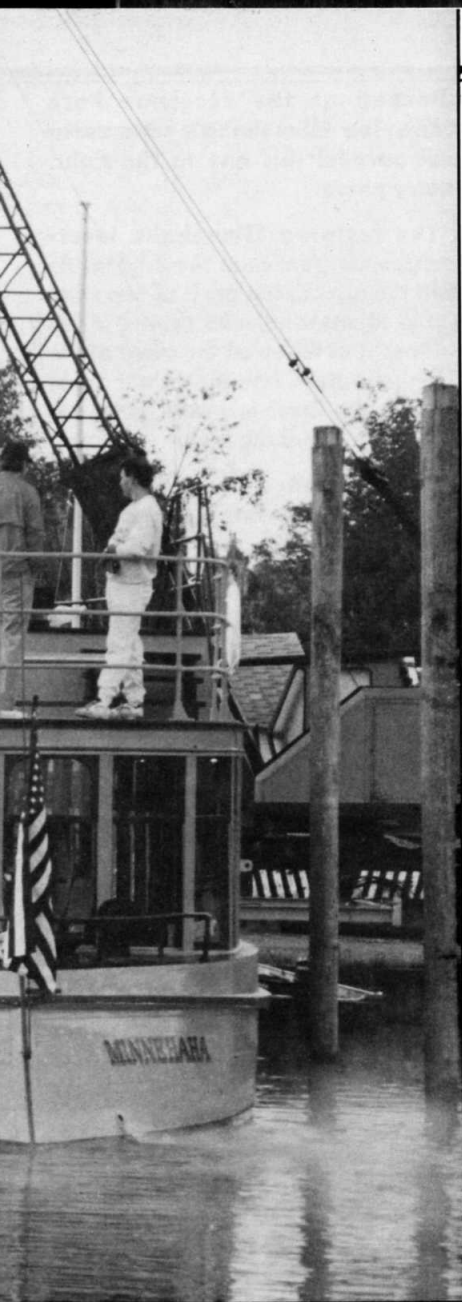
#### Crew training

Those Museum members who will run Minnehaha's steam engine must hold a Class A steam boiler engineer's license from the State of Minnesota. Thus far, two boiler operator classes have been held to qualify candidates for their licenses. In addition, engineers will receive training on board the boat itself to familiarize them thoroughly with it.

Pilots are required to hold a license issued by the U.S. Coast Guard for operators of large passenger vessels. In addition to a written test, pilots must complete 25 hours piloting a large vessel under supervision of a licensed pilot.





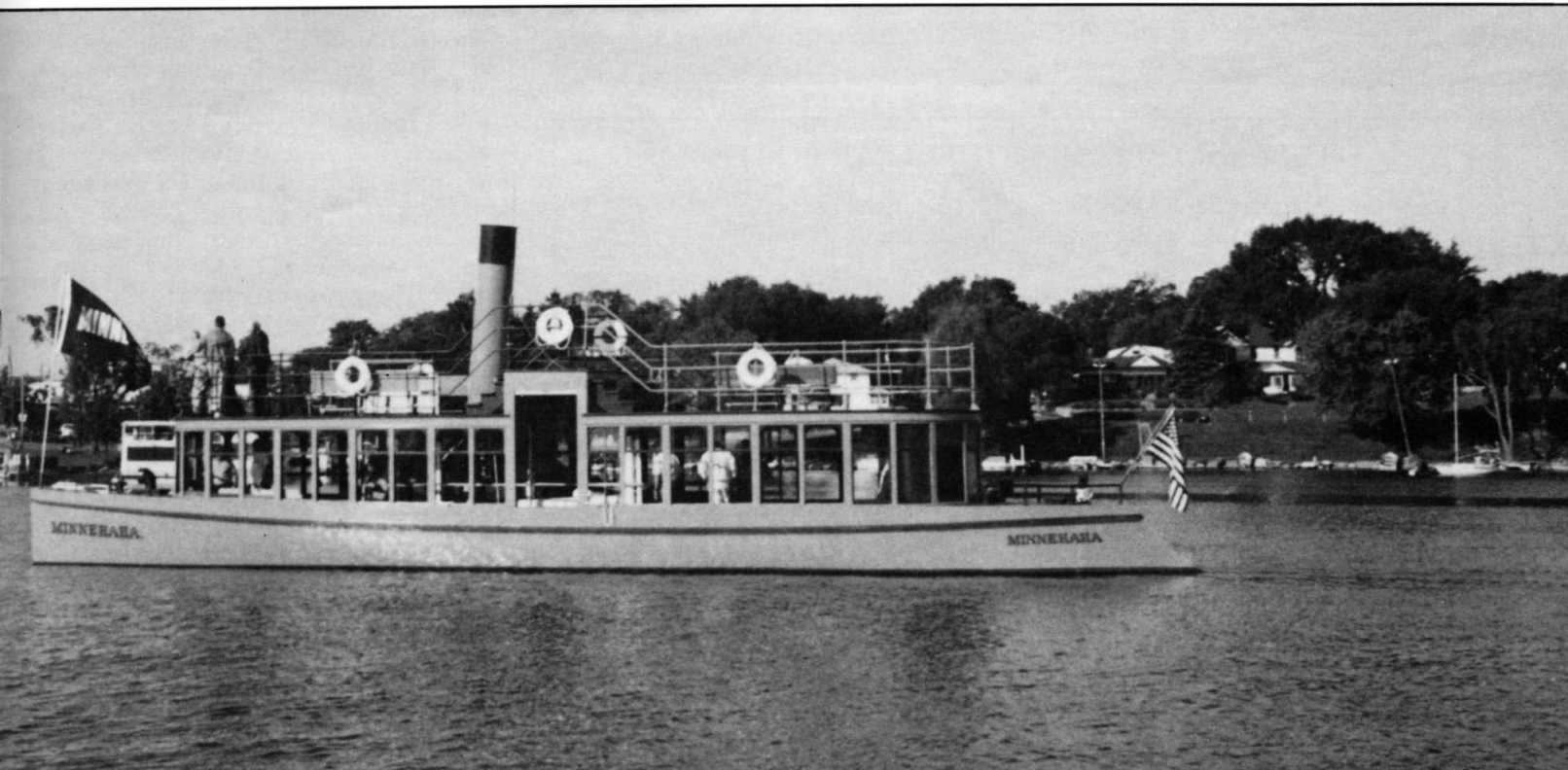


**Left photos: At the dredge yard, the trailer had to turn 90 degrees and back down into the water. Leo Meloche photos.**

**Center: Once in the water, the Minnehaha was pushed into this nearby enclosure of pilings, where it could be lashed down for static tests.**

**Above: The big day came on September 1st, when Minnehaha set out into the lake for her first open water sea trials. Just out of the dredge yard she follows the narrow channel to the open lake for the first time. Stan Straley photos.**

**After full speed testing off Big Island, the Minnehaha returns at long last to Excelsior Bay. That's the foot of Water Street just off the bow. Jackie Robertson photo.**





**Left: Docked at the Excelsior Park restaurant. The Minnehaha's permanent dock will parallel this one to the right. Stan Straley photo.**

**Right: The restored Minnehaha incorporates elements from both the original six boats and the later Excelsior. It differs from the original Minnehaha, and Harriet which had rooflines that followed the curve of the hull. The restoration has a straight cabin roofline, like the Excelsior, and this gives the bow a more low-slung look.**

**From top: MTM collection, Stan Straley photo, Sweet photo for TCRT, Ramsey County Historical Society collection.**

Charter boat operators on Lake Minnetonka have offered interested MTM members the opportunity to accumulate these hours without charge. Pilots also will have to be trained in on Minnehaha specifically, because its operation and handling are quite different from modern twin-screw diesel boats.

**Meanwhile, back at the carbarn...**

The boat had been gone from the boat building but a couple of days when the two powered streetcar trucks purchased earlier this year were moved in for tear-down, inspection and painting. **Tim Reichel, Jeff Ettinger and Gordy Peterson** began removing the wheel sets, brake rigging and swing links in preparation for moving the truck frames outside to be sandblasted. Barring unforeseen problems, plans call for having these trucks painted and partially reassembled before Minnehaha is brought back to the building for winter storage.

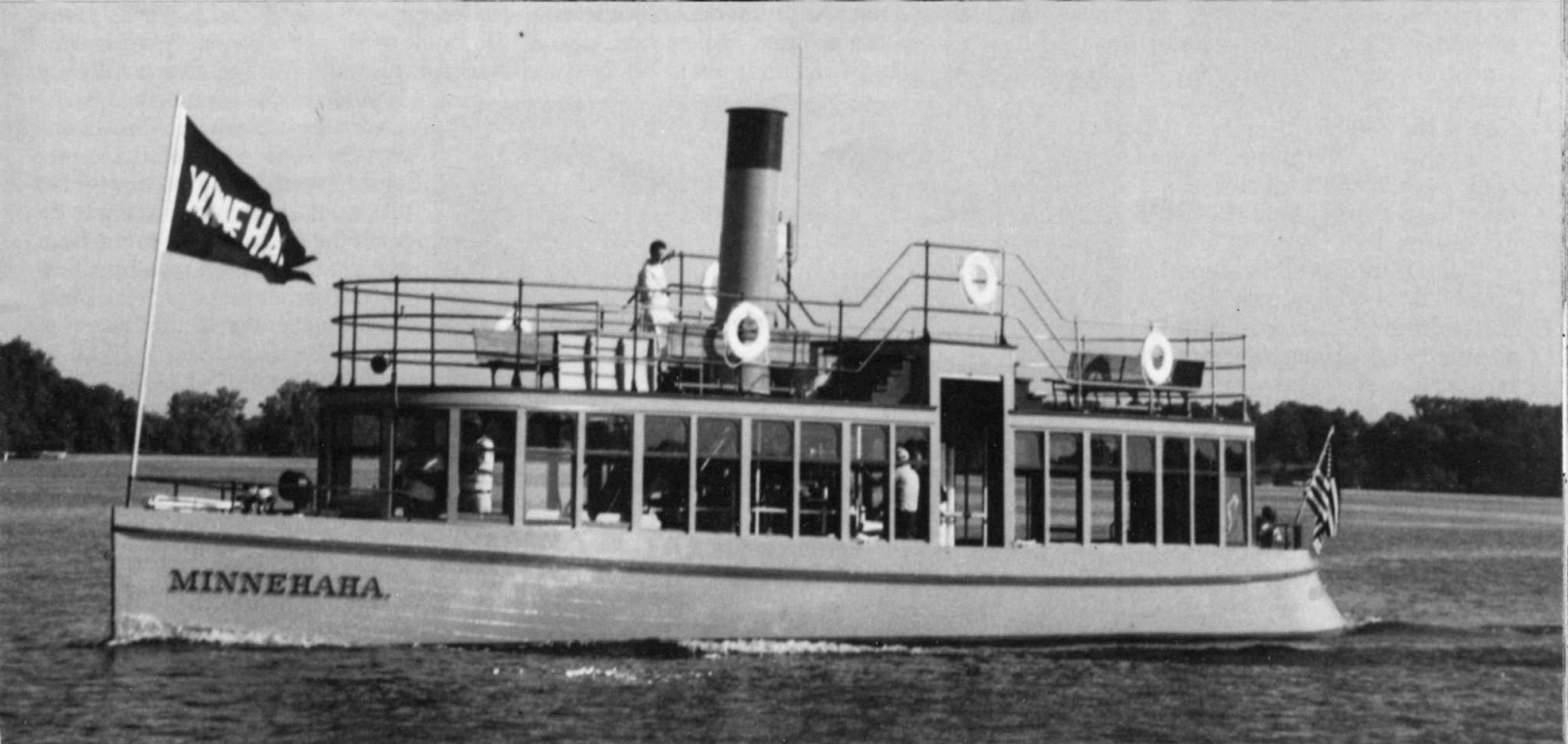
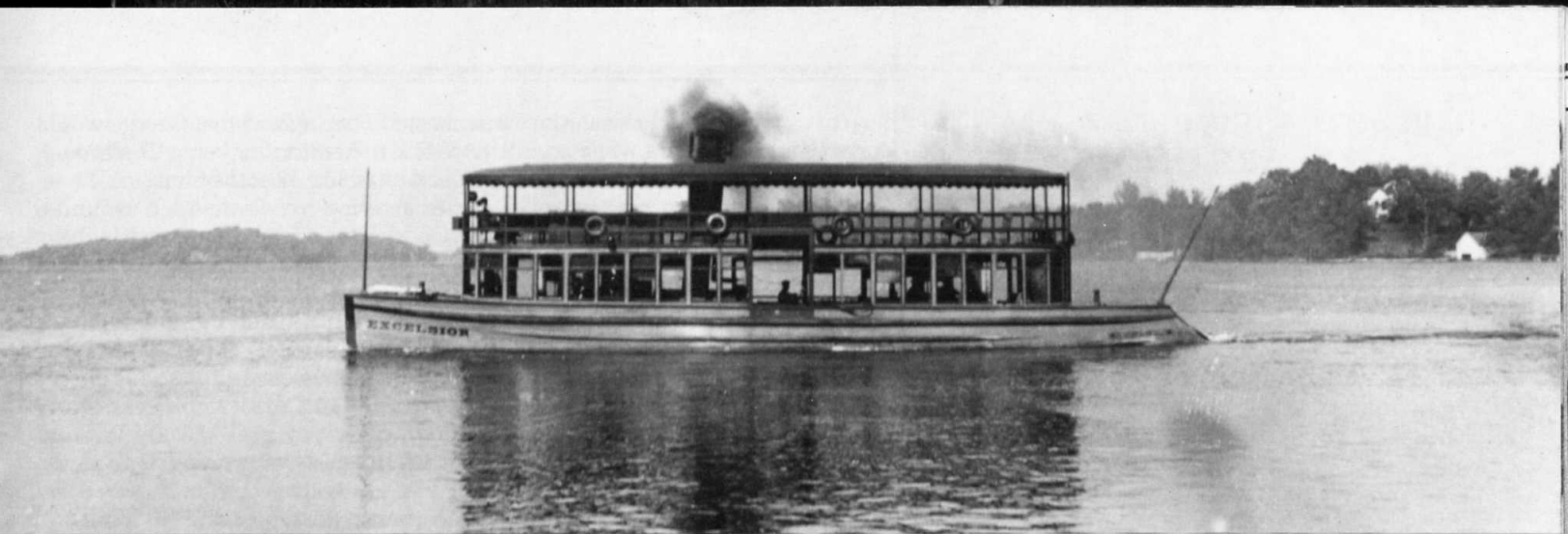
The federal ISTE A grant, approved a year ago to fund the Excelsior streetcar line, has been delayed further. The cash is not expected to arrive before next February. To avoid delaying construction of the carbarn for another year, donations will be sought to fund the first stage of the barn with construction hoped to begin around October 15. The site will be provided by the City of Excelsior adjacent to Minnesota Highway 7 along the LRT trail. It will consist of a heated, single stall pole building with trackage, but lacking sanitary facilities, a pit, paved floor and other amenities that will be added later. The unheated storage portion of the barn will be built next year using ISTE A funds. When the building is finished, the trucks and the carbody of TCRT Car #1239 will be moved in from Jackson Street Roundhouse so that restoration work can begin.

## HOW MUCH FOR A STREETCAR BOAT?

**Russ Olson**, the Indiana Jones of the TCRT financial records, has unearthed the cost of the original six streetcar boats, plus the modifications they received between 1907 and 1917.

Construction of six boats	(1905-06)	\$77,572
Install two toilets in each, awnings on four boats and ventilators on each	(1907)	\$1590
One life raft for each boat	(1910)	\$698
Build canopies on five boats	(1911)	\$1590
Remove toilets, reinstall circular rear seats	(1911)	\$17
Install toilets on six boats	(1915)	\$1723
Illuminated destination signs	(1915)	\$232
Lockers	(1915)	\$128
Equip each boat with a fare register	(1916)	\$608
<b>Total cost</b>		<b>\$83,677</b>
<b>Average cost per boat</b>		<b>\$13,946</b>





## GEORGE S. SWEENEY: 52 YEARS OF RAILROADING

-Michael E. Miller

*As part of the Oral History Project, Mike Miller interviewed retired 93 year old Milwaukee Road conductor George Sweeney. He proved to have a wonderful memory and the result was six hours of taped interviews. Sweeney was the guest of honor at MTM's 1994 annual meeting dinner.*

"That last trip I made...I was just as pleased with that one as I was with my very first trip. When that was over, yeah, that was the end of it. If I had to live it all over again, I wouldn't want it to change, not one bit. I was so darn crazy about railroading that if they needed anybody in an emergency, I was the first one they would call because I'd never turn them down..."

George Sweeney was born upstairs in the Soo Line depot in Tenney, MN on February 2, 1902. In that year, Tenney boasted a population of some 200 persons, five grain elevators, and 6-8 passenger trains a day plus a variety of freight trains. Today Tenney is home to six people. The depot, like hundreds across the midwest, was torn down years ago. A couple of times in recent years George has driven out to Tenney for a town reunion, and he always visits the site of the depot. The last time out, George stayed overnight on the family farm of a relative near town. As he lay in bed musing on the fact that it had been exactly 86 years since he had last spent a night in the room, and that none of the furnishings had changed, his thought was, "not bad, 86 years between sleeps".

George's father, born in 1870 in upstate New York, trained in railroad telegraphy in Valparaiso, IN. Originally employed by the Northern Pacific, he was the telegrapher at Tenney.

Shortly after George was born, the family moved to Minneapolis, to a duplex on 15th Avenue and 24th Street—just a few blocks from the Milwaukee Road yards at 26th and Hiawatha. George says that, while the other boys would be out after school playing football and basketball, "my interests were down in the railroad yard. I went to the yards and got to know the switchmen and watch their acrobatics, and the powerful little switch engines..." He had frequent run-ins with the

railroad detectives who would chase him off, but George would hide for a while and then head right back to the yards.

George's goal was to be a brakeman, but the minimum age was 21, so he went to the superintendent of the roundhouse and asked for a job there. He was hired as a rivet heater in the boiler shop. His job was to heat the one-inch rivets in the charcoal fired forge, use tongs to put them in his tin bucket, and then toss them up to the man "on the tank" who would drive the rivet into the hole to be flattened by another man. It was this job that cost George a portion of his hearing. He says the shop "made one hell of a racket—only a damn fool would take a job like that."



**Last fall, George Sweeney spent the day at Osceola lifting first class tickets. Here he is with #A-11's crew, John Diers and Louis Hoffman. Mike Miller photo.**

George soon discovered that the man living in the lower unit of their duplex was a Milwaukee Road brakeman. He knew that George was under age but he also knew that, it being the First World War, trains sometimes stood idle for lack of crews. He asked George if he was good at lies. George said he was raised on "the straight and narrow", but he did want the job... The fellow then suggested that they go up to Montevideo and talk to his

trainmaster. They agreed that George would try to stick to his story of being 21 although "I looked more like 12 at the time."

After arriving in Montevideo around 6 AM, George was introduced to Mr. Nee, the trainmaster, who promptly asked him how old he was. A moment of hesitation and George felt his friend give him a kick in the back of his heel. "Twenty-one, sir." The trainmaster's smile faded. "When's your birthday?" Correct answer. "How old did you say you are?" Kick. "Twenty-one". "Well", said the trainmaster, "if you insist you're twenty-one, take this form and go over to the depot and fill it out."

George was soon back and was given the book of rules to go study and come back for an exam. George said he already had the rules memorized as he had his own book. The trainmaster then examined George and all went well until they got to the crucial 99th rule, having to do with the protection of trains from the rear. The trainmaster maintained that George's answer was wrong, but at that moment the chief dispatcher walked in and confirmed that George's answer was the correct one. George was hired as a brakeman and it was further decided that, since he only weighed 125 pounds, he should start his career in passenger service.

He was assigned to a Mr. Cinclair, a fatherly conductor who George still remembers fondly as the man who gave him a good start in his career. George began making his student trips from St. Paul to Aberdeen on the Hastings and Dakota Division, where he would work for the better part of the next 52 years.

In short order, a brakeman on Cinclair's crew left, George got qualified and was assigned to the crew. Not having a uniform, he went down on Washington Avenue and bought "an old blue suit—about four sizes too big". Soon he was head brake-man, at the ripe old age of 16, which he said made him feel "pretty important" as he got to give the engineer the highball.

George said he was "crazy about the locomotives" and would request rides in the cab any chance he got. He also learned to fire the locomotives, learning the right technique for throwing the coal into the back corners of the firebox to produce just the right color of white smoke.

His regular run would get into Aberdeen at 6:45 AM at which point the



rest of the crew would have breakfast and go to bed to get rested for the 8 PM return. Not George. He would go back to the depot and head out on any train that would allow him to get back for his return trip. After a time, the conductor noticed that George had a hard time staying awake and asked, "Why don't you go to bed like the rest of us?"

A favorite story of George's, and one that he didn't tell until all the other members of the crew had passed on, is about the time he decided to ride the pilot of a speeding steam locomotive. The site for this "crazy stunt" was the small step or footboard on the side of the pilot, barely nine inches above the rail.

On a westward trip, George asked Mr. Sinclair if he could ride in the locomotive for a while. With that approved, he climbed between the mail car and the express car and dashed up to the pilot step, out of sight of everyone. With two toots of the whistle, the train left the station. As George describes it, "As the speed increased, so did the wind pressure. Quickly, I buttoned the four buttons on my coat, jammed the uniform cap tight on my head and with both hands took a firm grip on the coupler pin lifter behind my back. As we reached full speed I

**In 1918 at age 16. George is holding one of the first electric lanterns. Most were still kerosene. Note the union badge on his vest. A railroad official had told him not to wear it on his cap. George Sweeney collection.**



realized the folly of my prank. Suddenly, like a flash, something missed hitting me in the face. I turned my head to the right and saw a dead crow that had been smashed against the boilerhead and dropped near my side. If the crow had hit my head this story would not be written today..."

In the succeeding 52 years, George spent most of his time on the Hastings and Dakota in both passenger and freight service. In 1967 he made the last trip on the last passenger train to Aberdeen, a line that once had eight passenger trains a day—thereby ending over 100 years of passenger service.

Due to his seniority he also worked as conductor on the Olympian Hiawathas to the west coast and the Twin Cities Hiawathas to Chicago. The Hiawatha would put on extra coaches on the weekends and carry up to 900 passengers—normal was 400-500 with a consist of 11-12 coaches, baggage car, diner and club car. He recalls the brand new train sets the Milwaukee received in 1948. Although the speed limit was 50 mph on the grade separated 29th Street line across south Minneapolis, the engineer would throttle back to 25-30 because the overhead bridges were packed with spectators and he wanted "to let them have a good look".

George will be 94 this year. At one point he said, "You know, there was nothing unusual about my career, it's just that I'm the last one". But for those who were just growing up and the end of the time of the great passenger trains, George Sweeney epitomized the best of what railroaders of that era were like.

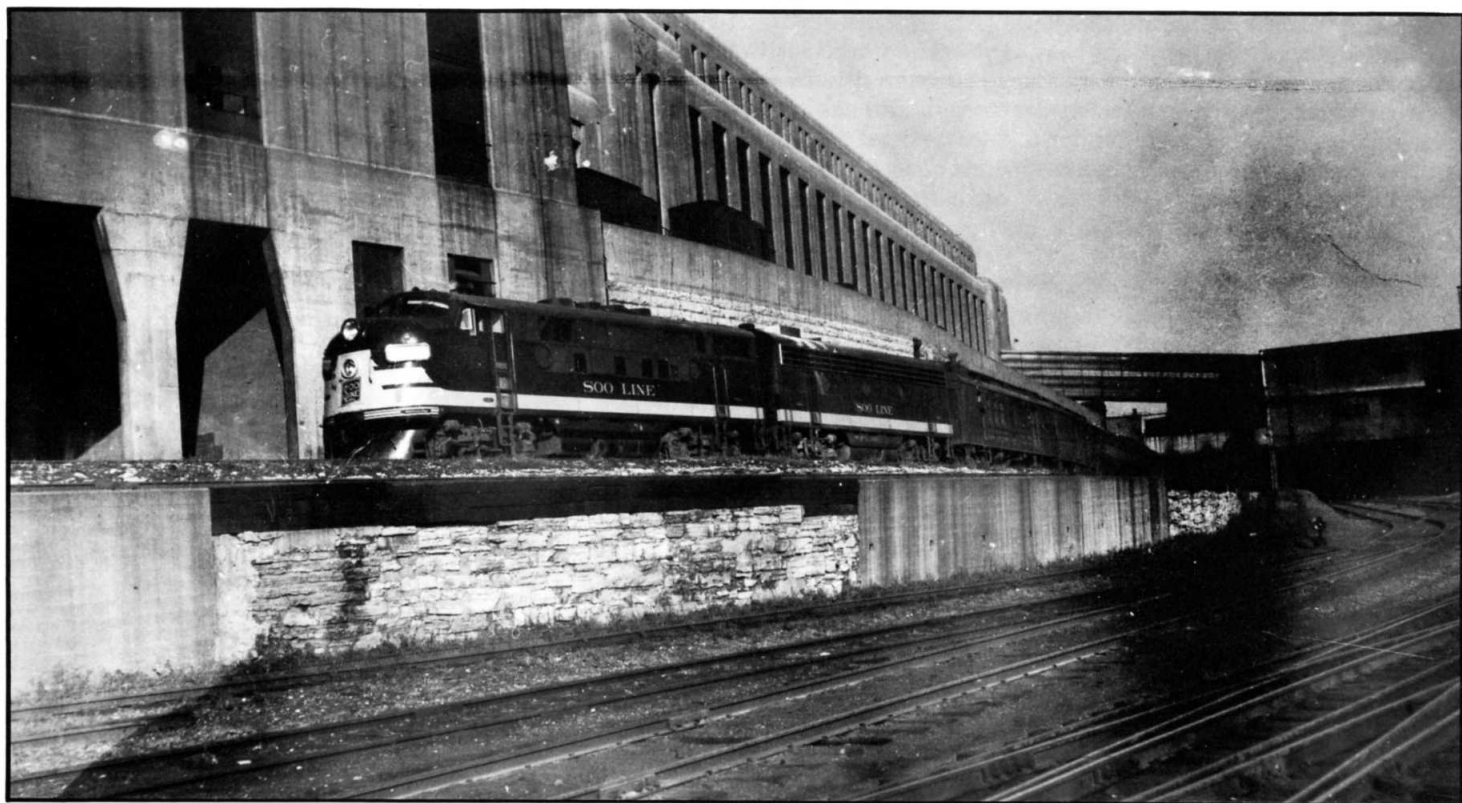
In the fall of 1994, George went to Osceola for the day dressed in his Milwaukee Road conductor uniform. When asked if he would like to punch the tickets, the old lights came on and the years came off. George was once again moving with grace and wit among the passengers, lifting tickets, telling stories and having his picture taken with the children. He remarked that it "was great to be back with the people". When someone asked him who he was, he responded, "Just an old conductor looking for his train."



**At Olivia, MN in 1921. The other man is the "news butcher".**

**Working #55 in La Crosse in August 1969, just before his retirement. Both George Sweeney collection.**





**Above: In the late 1950's the Soo Line Winnipeg passes the main post office on its way to the Milwaukee Road depot. John Malven photo, Ray Norton collection.**

**Below: The Minneapolis Northfield & Southern made a good living relaying freight between Twin Cities railroads and saving them days in the process. This potato train is a case in point. Minnesota Historical Society collection.**



**TRAINLOAD of SIXTY CARS of RED H  
SEED POTATOES SHIPPED by BERT OFF  
MOORHEAD, MINN., to GROWERS at  
ORRICK, MO.,  
ASSEMBLED by M.N. & So. RY. 3-15-**





Above: "The Arches" is a landmark on the former C&NW, now DM&E line from Winona to Rochester. In this 1920's postcard view, double headed Mikados hoist tonnage west bound out of the Mississippi River valley. MTM Collection.  
 Below: Steamers await scrapping at the Omaha Road's Randolph Street shops in 1949. No that's not our #328. St. Paul Dispatch Pioneer Press photo, Minnesota Historical Society Collection.





**In the late 1920s, TCRT sent a photographer up onto the roofs of its carhouses to record the splendor of yards full of streetcars. These two views look northwest and northeast from Lake Street Station. Note the motor-trailer trains, a shortlived operation designed to increase capacity in the twenties. The depression cut ridership in half and the trailers were scrapped. MTM collection.**



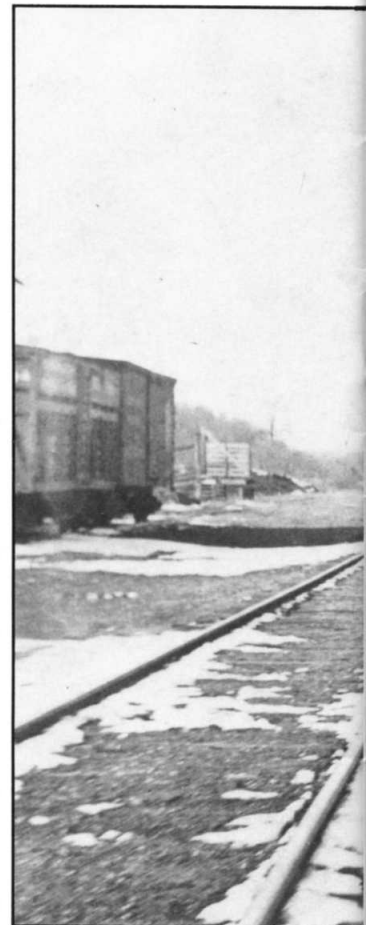




The seldom photographed end of the South St. Paul line at Linden Street in Inver Grove (there was no Inver Grove Heights in those days). The streetcar is in the middle of Concord Street, about to back around the wye at left. In front of the car, the old St. Paul Southern track peters outs as it heads for the side of the road. Bill Janssen photo.

In 1957, the Minnesota River piled a two acre logjam against the M&STL's Carver bridge. The crane crew has a long day ahead of it. At upper right is the Carver depot and the water tank that survives today. Star-Tribune collection.





**Above:** Here is the Marine depot about 1900. This is where OSV engines run around their trains today. Minnesota Historical Society collection.

**Right:** A Northern Pacific limited drifts into Detroit Lakes in the 1920's. MTM collection.

**Streetcars in the newer neighborhoods of far south Minneapolis.**

**Above left:** A Bloomington Avenue car approaches the terminal at 54th Street.

**Center:** A Nicollet Avenue car heads south across the Minnehaha Creek bridge.

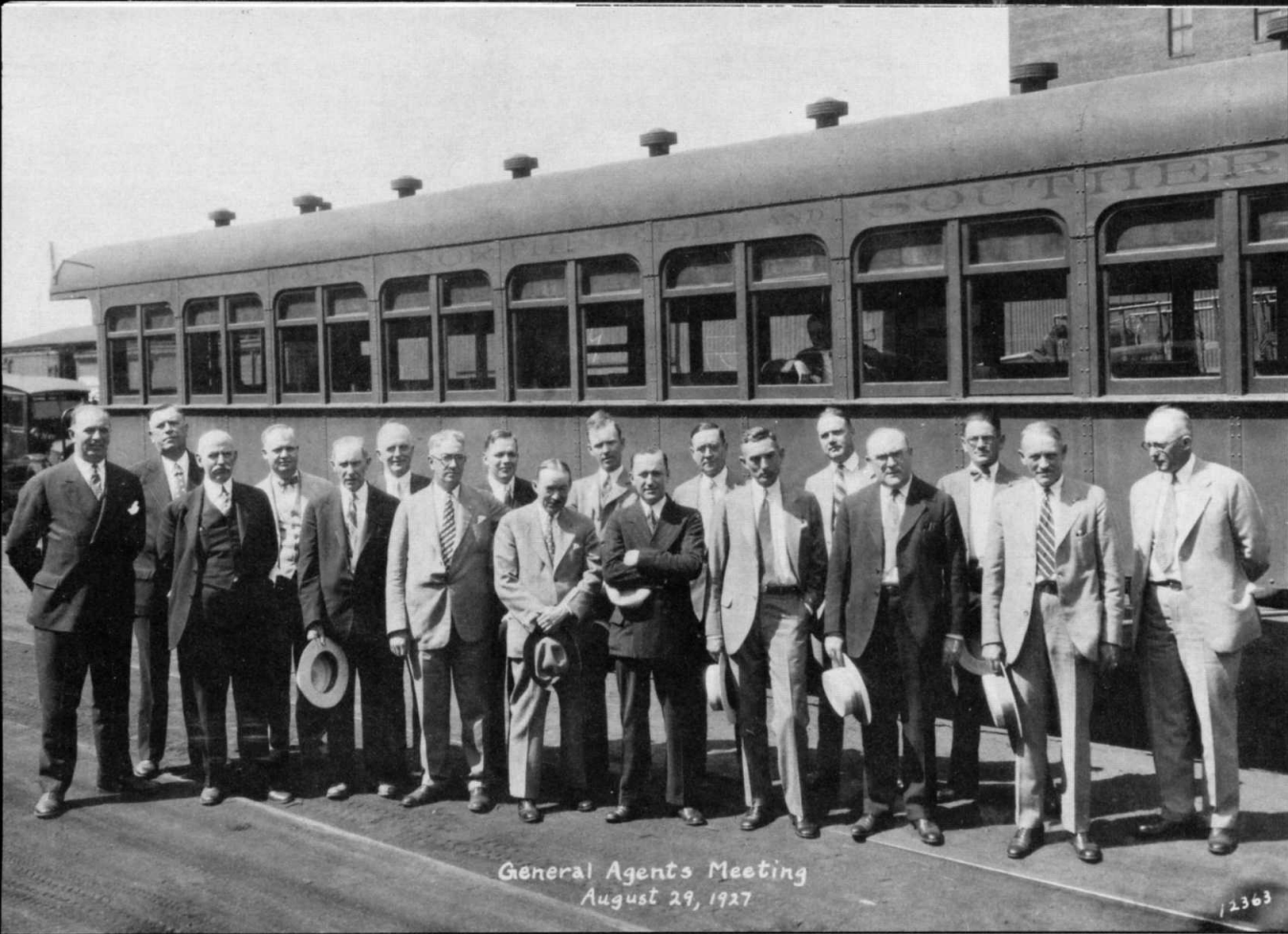
**Right:** PCC's unload at the end of the Bryant line at 56th Street.

**Photos by:**  
Bill Olsen, Bob Schumacher and  
Jim Neubauer.



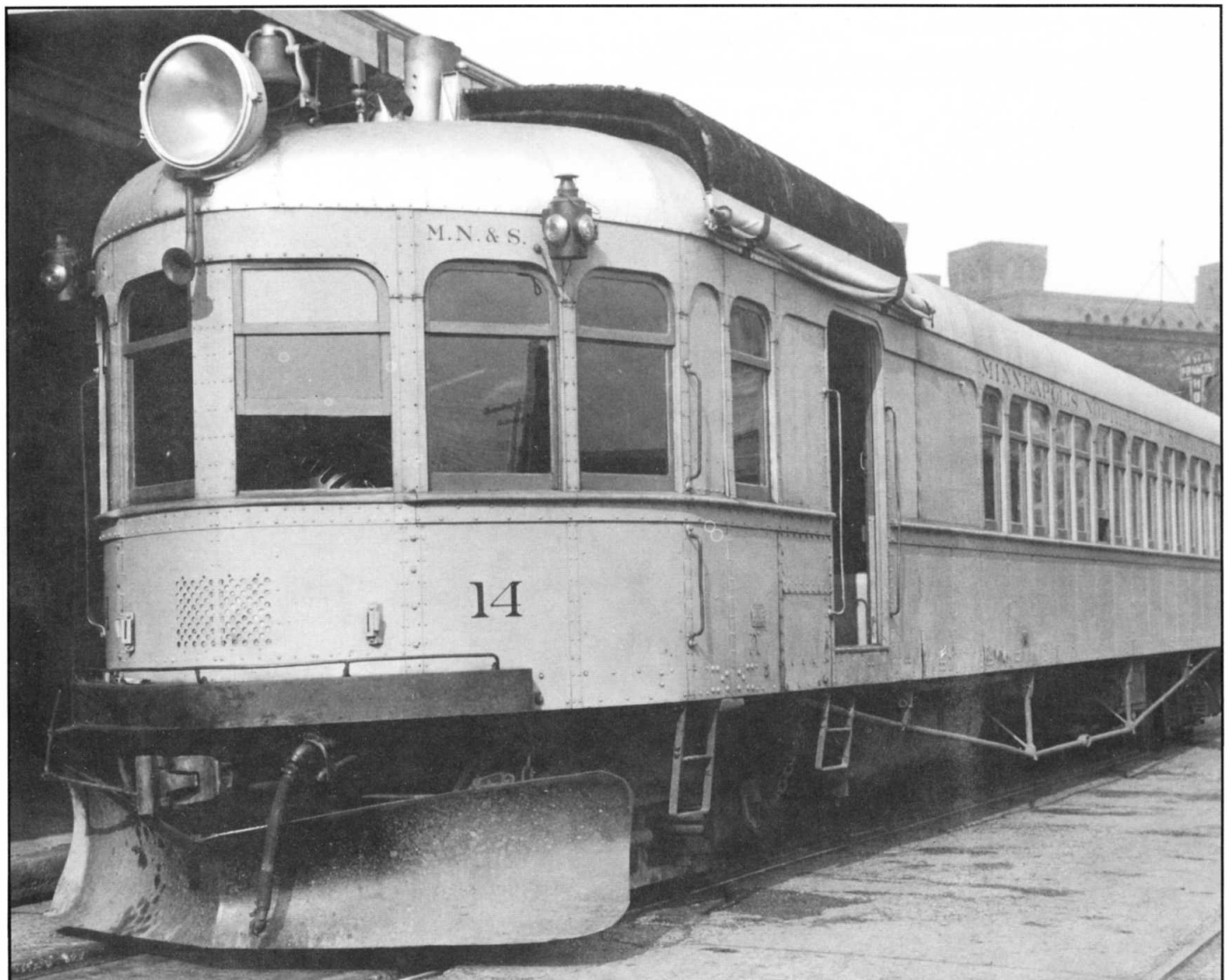






General Agents Meeting  
August 29, 1927

12363





Photos of the Dan Patch gas electrics after 1920 are rare. Both of these are at the Minneapolis depot.

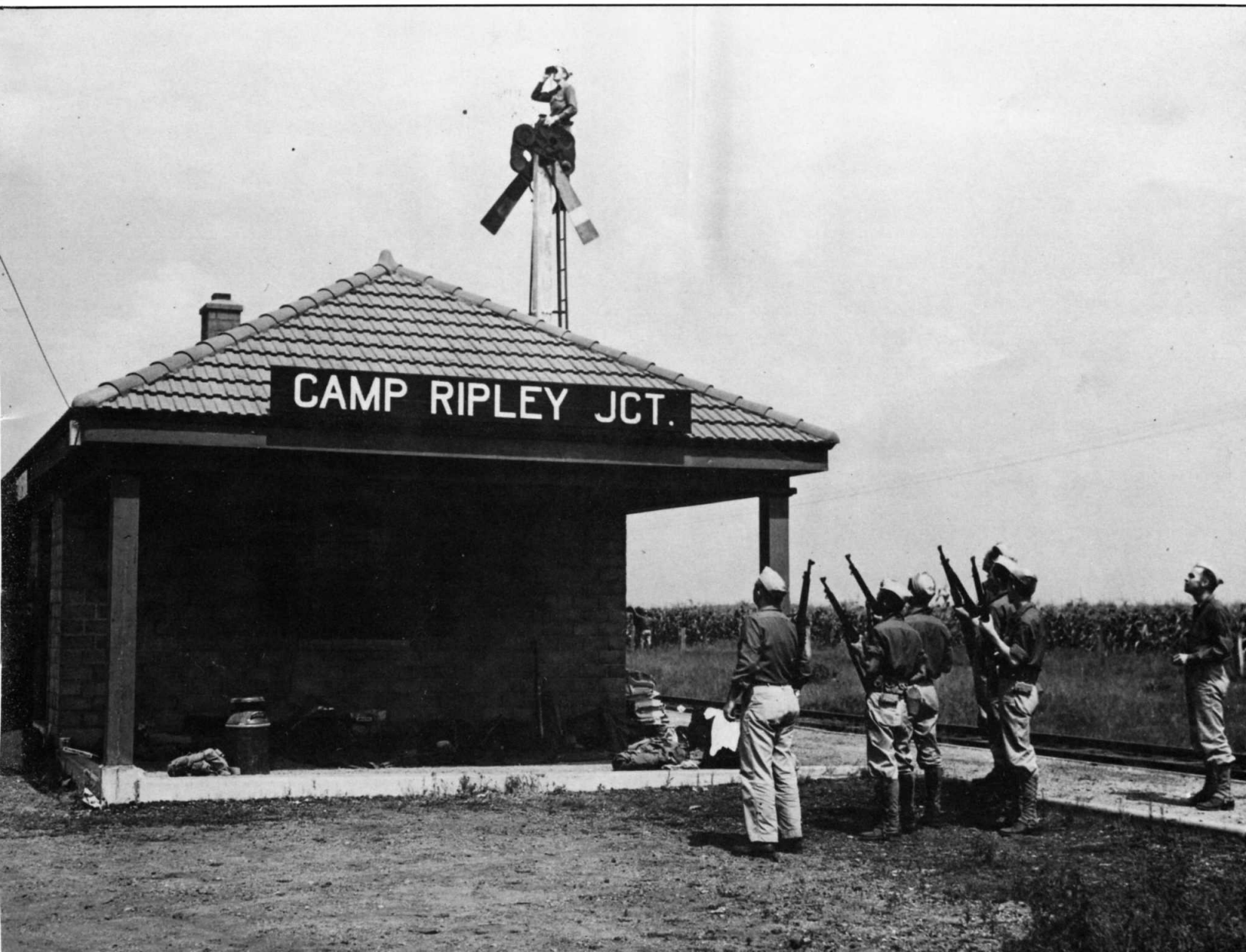
Left: The railroad's General Agents assemble in 1927. Minnesota Historical Society collection.

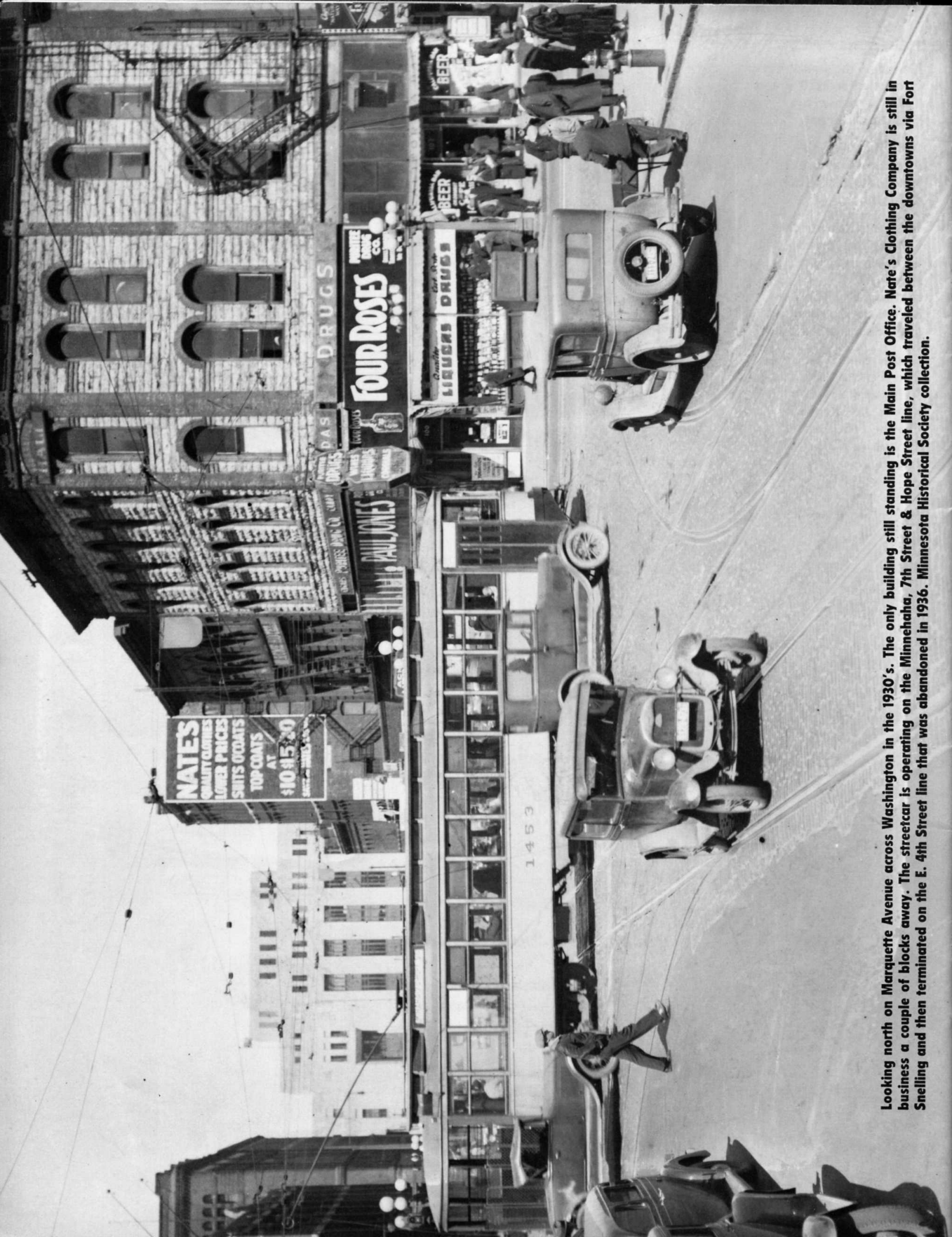
Bottom: The last run in 1941. The conductor and engineer had been with the company since 1910 and 1913 respectively. The last train carried eight passengers. Star-Tribune collection.

Below: War is Hell - part 2. Recruits scan the skies for Axis aircraft that might attack the depot at Camp Ripley Jct. during WWII. Minnesota Historical Society collection.



Right: In the early 1920's, an M&St.L ten wheeler drops its fire in the ashpit at the NP Mississippi Street roundhouse in St. Paul. Helmut Kroening photo, Minnesota Historical Society collection.

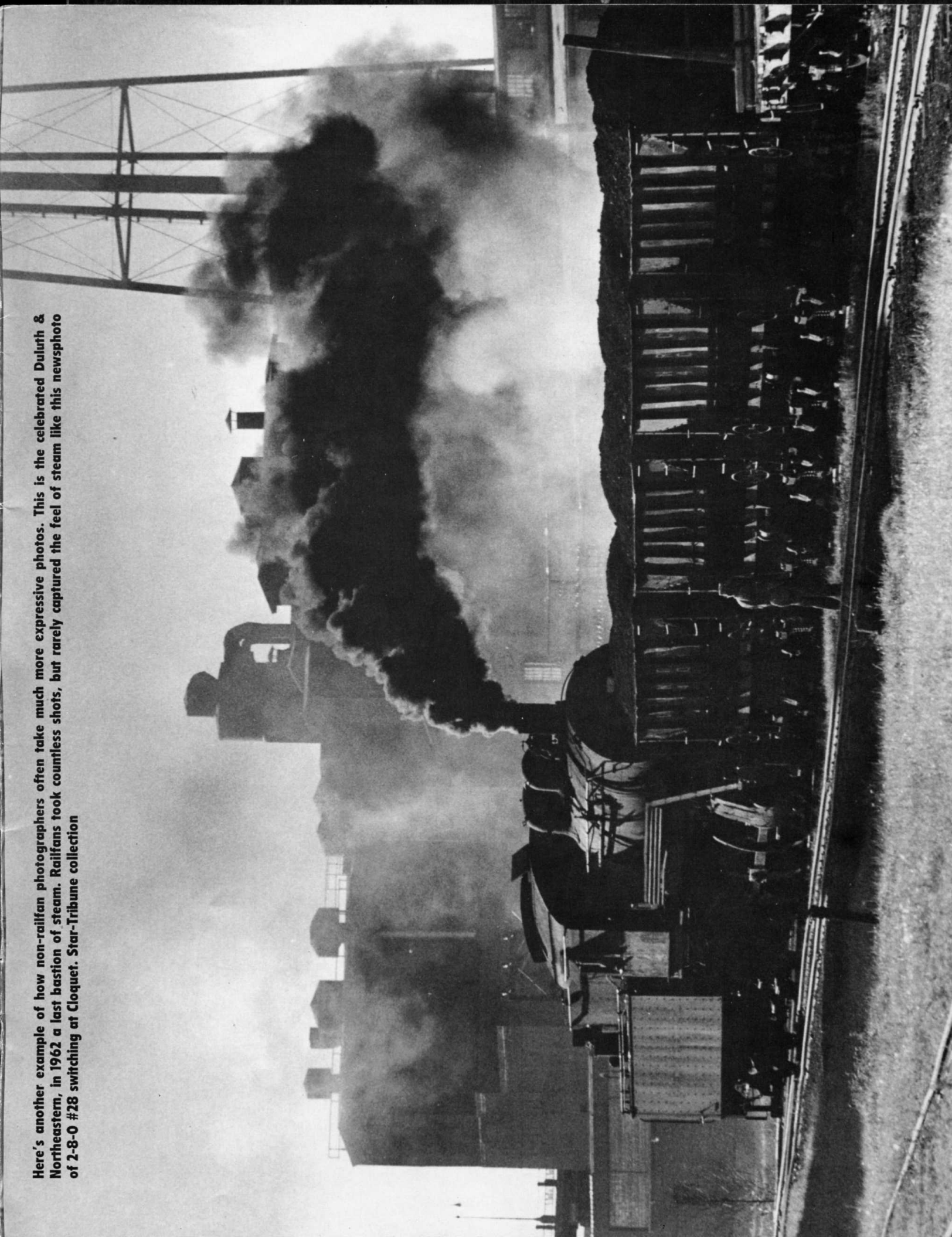


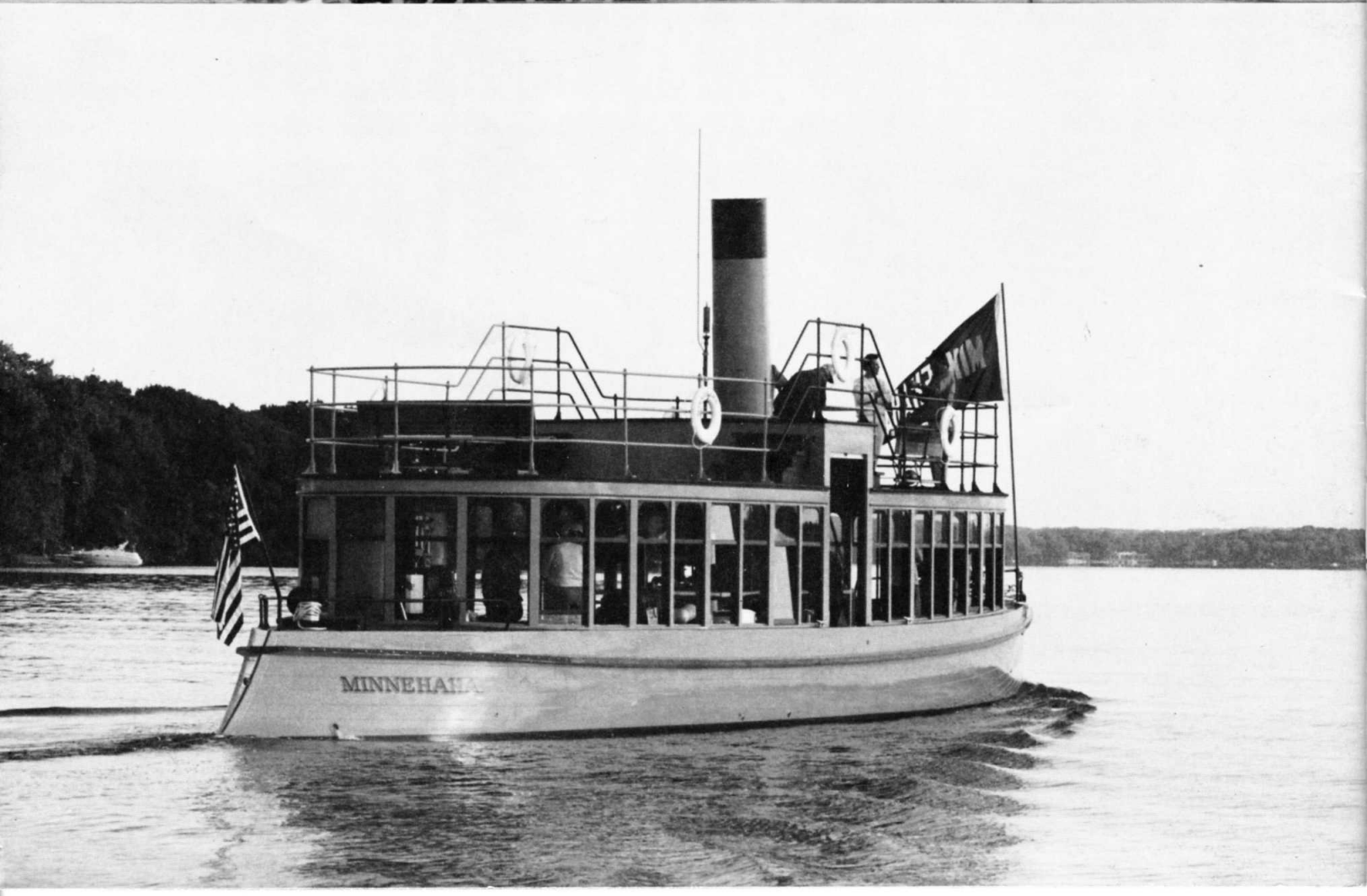


Looking north on Marquette Avenue across Washington in the 1930's. The only building still standing is the Main Post Office. Nate's Clothing Company is still in business a couple of blocks away. The streetcar is operating on the Minnehaha, 7th Street & Hope Street line, which traveled between the downtowns via Fort Snelling and then terminated on the E. 4th Street line that was abandoned in 1936. Minnesota Historical Society collection.



Here's another example of how non-railfan photographers often take much more expressive photos. This is the celebrated Duluth & Northeastern, in 1962 a last bastion of steam. Railfans took countless shots, but rarely captured the feel of steam like this newsphoto of 2-8-0 #28 switching at Cloquet. Star-Tribune collection









# MINNESOTA STREETCAR MUSEUM

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August 2021

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